# Voltaire's Jews and Modern Jewish Identity

## Rethinking the Enlightenment

Harvey Mitchell

Routledge Jewish Studies Series

# Voltaire's Jews and Modern Jewish Identity

Harvey Mitchell's book argues that a reassessment of Voltaire's treatment of traditional Judaism will sharpen discussion of the origins of, and responses to, the Enlightenment. His study shows how Voltaire's nearly total antipathy to Judaism is best understood by stressing his self-regard as the author of an enlightened and rational universal history, which found Judaism's memory of its past incoherent, and, in addition, failed to meet the criteria of objective history—a project in which he failed.

Claiming that by laying bare the "true" history of the ancient Jews, emphasizing the marginal role of Jews after their dispersal, and contrasting it with the "myths" he insisted they had created, Voltaire concluded that Judaism was a kind of imposture, not fit for the modern world. By bringing the Jews into history and exposing their myths, their actual importance would not only be more accurately represented but also shown for what he thought Judaism was—an insignificant moment in the past and a sorry remnant in the Europe of his day, and should therefore best disappear.

The Enlightenment's key issues of particularism and universalism set the terms of the fierce debate during the course of Jewish emancipation, acculturation, assimilation and Jewish self-identity. Calling on an array of Jewish and non-Jewish figures to reveal how modern interpretations of Judaism may be traced to the core ideas of the Enlightenment, this book concludes that Voltaire paradoxically helped to foster the ambiguities and uncertainties of Judaism's future.

**Harvey Mitchell** is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of British Columbia, Canada.

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**Voltaire's Jews and Modern Jewish Identity**
Rethinking the enlightenment
*Harvey Mitchell*

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## Rethinking the Enlightenment

**Harvey Mitchell**

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**Dedicated to the memory of my parents, Max and Rebecca**

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# Preface and acknowledgments

In the popular imagination, as well as in literary and historical milieu, Voltaire embodies the principal values and dogmas of the Enlightenment. His immense output is testament to an endlessly probing mind, which sought out every corner where obscurantism might find a hiding place. The genres that he cultivated nearly always matched the grave issues they raised, but more often his favorite method took the guise of a lighthearted exposure—often concealing his anger and fury—of human foibles and pretensions, whether he drew them from real life or fictionalized them in plays and novels. His work and person have fed an endless stream of scholarship. In the present instance, the reader should expect a book that has been planned on a scale more appropriate to one aspect of his interests. It is, first of all, a study of Voltaire's nearly total alienation from, and antipathy to Judaism, its religion, ethos and rabbinic traditions that helped shape it and held it in place in the centuries following the physical destruction of the Second Temple. That Judaism thereafter existed as a body of teachings and values in a mental, not in a historical space, was Jewish hubris writ large. To expose Judaism's pretensions, he sought out to locate it in its historical past. By his reckoning, Jews inhabited an insignificant moment in the past, while managing by various stratagems to live on in the present as a sorry remnant. Secondly, the book travels beyond the eighteenth century Enlightenment, essaying how the "Jewish Question," as it came to be labeled, assumed several guises after his death, and how Jews, principally in the West, sought to create a modern identity inspired by the values of the Enlightenment. They quickly absorbed their importance for forging a future liberated from ancient stigmas, but, in many instances, they also began to question them, bringing to light a disturbing aspect of the Enlightenment itself, namely its ambivalent, sometimes highly critical, relationship with Judaism, giving rise to the contention that it was paradoxically one of the sources of modern anti-Semitism. This troubling development forms the background against which the book invites a reconsideration of the Enlightenment's origins and its reception by later generations of thinkers. In many unexpected and novel ways, the issues of particularism and universalism that first emerged early in the eighteenth century debate on how

Jews should be seen historically, and how they might flourish in modern society, remain the central themes of the discourse to the present day, though arguably in an atmosphere of lesser urgency and turmoil. These questions became subjects of intense debate, not only in Jewish circles, which had their own share of friends and critics of the Enlightenment, but also in the larger intellectual community in which Jews constituted an important element.

I have conceived this book in part as an extended essay, and have in view, as the form implies, the challenge of testing a number of ideas. Such an approach allows me to range over a wide territory of interlocking disciplines, and in turn offers an opportunity for reflection that takes the question of Voltaire's hostility to Judaism beyond the conventional critiques that identify him either as an arch-enemy of the Jews or find reason to exonerate him. His insights, I argue, did not always match his brilliance. I believe I can show this by seeking to understand him as a historian unable to turn the spotlight of his considerable qualities as a critic of his time and place, on his own intellectual and emotional shortcomings. In the sense that the book deals with the history and condition of Jews, how they saw themselves, but even more so how non-Jews saw them, there can be little doubt that the question of Jewish identity lies just under the surface of events only to reappear in times of political crisis. As such, the scare notes around the locution, the "Jewish Question," testify to its intractability, which appears to resist easy analysis and quick resolution. It can only elicit tentative, not present final, answers, especially as, I will argue, it concerns the various ways in which it has been connected with the ethos of the Enlightenment. As important, but much less easily grasped, are the complex arguments to support different definitions and concepts of Judaism, in short, how it was and is understood by Jews who cannot and often refuse to be categorized under an all-encompassing identity, but rather, in their responses to its protean nature, demonstrate a diversity of outlooks and strong divisions of opinion. This problem alone helped to determine the form I have chosen to give the book. It is meant to question. As for the more formal parts of my treatment in the first part of the book, I found it imperative, as a historian, to be guided by the internal demands of the discipline. The more familiar features of these requirements are hardly neglected in the second part, but they exist alongside a more contemplative, speculative, and even playful, interpretation of Judaism and Jews, most markedly the way in which Judaism and Jewish identity and the diffuse meanings given to "Jewishness" are discussed. The subjects in both parts should be seen as existing across time, but linked together by past and existing realities.

Voltaire's incorrigible playfulness cannot be ignored. His light, mischievous wit and daring, his unerring sense of how satire and reason could best tweak the noses of the powerful, remain his enduring and his most endearing qualities. His ironic smile and good-natured countenance have been captured by Houdon's sculptures in the Victoria and Albert Museum

and in the Hermitage. Jean Huber's painting of Voltaire at Ferney, the "Lever de Voltaire," pictures him getting into his trousers while dictating to his secretary. Nietzsche, who had a similar fondness for the aphoristic and the iconoclastic, thought of Voltaire as a kindred spirit who labored to banish as many sacred and hoary beliefs as possible and used his powers of persuasion to lighten the way to a less benighted society, freed from illusions and pieties—a goal that Nietzsche made his own. In this sense, Voltaire's Enlightenment assuredly lives on. It is most exuberantly alive in *Candide*, his most widely known masterpiece that continues to spark discussion around the general themes of the Enlightenment, now historically extended to include the question of its scope, the uniformity of its vision, and its commitment to reasonable change, indeed, to the idea that change was to be counted as a good benefiting all society. No small part of *Candide*'s intellectual and popular success is its elaboration of the conflicting currents in Enlightenment thought, and its fearless and hilarious exposure of human weakness and the human capacity for unchecked power. In its most extravagant and outrageous scenes, we witness betrayals, theft, thuggery, murder, rape, millions of lives extinguished, innocents tortured, others mutilated, fantasies shattered, and theodicies reduced as empty speculations. The satire is built, in most respects, on solid fact; reworked and reimagined, the satire and fact seem to fit together effortlessly. It is thus all the more disturbing that the play's few references to Jews betray the facts of Jewish existence.

The play reflects Voltaire's admiration for, and his campaign to make, Newtonianism and Lockean empiricism the undisputed and permanent focus of philosophical and theological thought. It was largely due to him that Newton and Locke dominated the course of the moderate Enlightenment in France until about the mid-point of the eighteenth century, encountering only scattered opposition from philosophical rivals, and also resistance from the Jansenists who were steadfastly loyal to the supremacy of the Bible and the Church Fathers in the interpretation of Christian revelation. Voltaire's espousal of Newtonianism reinforced the philosophical and theological concerns of the Society of Jesus that stood at the apex of humanistic Catholicism, and whose members, like Voltaire, argued that matter was inert and that divine providence was invisibly at work but could not be doubted. It also provided them with ammunition against atheism, which was as unthinkable to Voltaire as it was heretical to them. The synthesis he sought foundered in the face of a mounting Jansenist critique determined to restore the Church's pristine values. What we remember more than the intricacies of these disputes is his unrelenting battle against a more inclusive Church doctrine that presumed to determine all intellectual and scientific activity and to preserve a monopoly on all spiritual questions.

Nietzsche uses the phrase "banner of the Enlightenment" to contrast the failure of the heirs of the Enlightenment to pursue their mission with the same zeal shown by the Jesuits on whom he showered the praise that

history, if correctly perceived, owed them. To grasp the Enlightenment's true nature, he said, one had also to return to Petrarch, Erasmus and Voltaire before its banner could rightfully be carried aloft. Historical justice demanded the acknowledgement that religion had for a time met humanity's "metaphysical need," a need ignored by the "historical interpretation introduced by the Age of Enlightenment." Seen as a "purely scientific problem," metaphysics would be shown in time to be a species of error and self-deception. On this matter, Nietzsche was making his genuflections to Voltaire, who also eschewed metaphysics. Metaphysics was a delusion, Voltaire believed, and as such was to be borne as a burden and therefore as a hindrance to clear philosophical thought. But Nietzsche also implied that Voltaire, as he put it, realized that "out of reaction we have created progress." Voltaire was not, however, a dialectical thinker. He simply identified what for him was the reactionary power of the Church and called for an end to it.[1]

There is no ambiguity in my decision to think of the children of Israel as "children of the Enlightenment," Nietzsche's turn of phrase to describe a key moment in the history of the Jews. For a small number in the world of commerce, and among those in the world of Jewish learning, that is, Jews within the rabbinic tradition whose work paradoxically kindled a critical spirit in the broader world of theological scholarship, the tenets of the Enlightenment, slowly at first but then with increasing momentum, thrust them into the modern world. This inspired new hopes but also created new risks when, for the first time they and non-Jews in France debated, in a rare spirit of toleration, tinged with gestures of condescension on the part of the latter, the "real" as opposed to the presumed Jewish shaping of Christian beliefs and whether Jews could be valuable subjects and valued as citizens. The values and goals of universalism with which the heirs of the Enlightenment identified, and the loyalties Jews felt they owed to it, on the one hand, and, on the other, their loyalties to their ancient beliefs, set the terms upon which a consensus on their compatibility might be built and sustained. If expectations were high, so were the uncertainties. Jews, to be sure, felt liberated, but they were uneasy in their response to the Enlightenment, wondering, almost from the beginning, how acculturation and assimilation would affect their communal traditions.

Voltaire's significance in asking these questions and offering solutions, from another perspective altogether, is to be located in his historical and anthropological interpretations; and it is there that we find Voltaire's unpleasant side. It is rooted in a myopia that overturned his logic and stood in the way of his historical sense and of his critical self, a blindness that led him down an egregious path towards an anti-Judaism strewn with satiric jibes against ancient Hebrews and contemporary Jews. While his preferred mode was the comic spirit, and while he could fairly use satire in his depiction of the events of his days, which were observable and verifiable, its use in his attempts to discover the "true" history of the Jews is questionable,

because the facts and realities of their past were inescapably difficult to trace. The mixture of two opposing genres, satire and history, in this case falls flat. Their conflation is slightly less glaring in his more serious historical works, in which he plots cultural developments throughout the globe, and, as well, in his narrative of the emergence of sociability in Europe which he regarded as an expression of the opening up of enlightened existence. The conflation, however, is tenuous, because his failure, as a biblical critic, to distinguish Jewish religion, which he treats with contempt, from Jewish history, which he brushes aside as tangential, indelibly marks nearly all of his analysis and conclusions. Not always so in his more popular *Dictionnaire philosophique* where the satire is allowed much greater scope. The sacred, of course, has been and can legitimately be a target of satire, but if it only succeeds in exposing the absurd, the fantastic and the irrational, it may ignore or denigrate the more enduring foundations of religious belief. It may also fail both to edify and run the risk of overwhelming and distorting history. If his project was unraveling the "authentic" history of the Jews by studying selected texts from the Old Testament, was he advancing historical study by attacking them so scornfully? To be sure, he believed he was exercising his sense of history in testing the texts for their veracity as a chronicle of Jewish history and Jewish religious beliefs. But he was, at the same time, not meeting his goals as a historian by failing to clarify the basis upon which he differentiated the elements that make up the theological, markedly those that are encrusted with myth, and those that can be historically isolated and scrutinized.

Admittedly, this was a very difficult, if not a wholly futile task, one that perplexes biblical scholars who try to separate these elements and offer reliable historical accounts of episodes and events in the distant past, especially in their efforts to treat the Old Testament as history. Indeed, Voltaire was less interested in establishing the true history of the events related in the Old Testament than in proving that it was a tissue of lies and nonsense. Conceptually, the distinction between the two was made with great difficulty in Voltaire's lifetime. He was certainly conscious of the need to deal with this question, and took pride in trying to destroy the myths and rescue the history. But he displayed considerable confusion as he moved from one to the other. One obvious reason is that Jewish history is, indeed, inseparable from its religion, and Voltaire was intent on questioning and undermining the latter as a weapon against the former, which he deemed a confusion of fables. In the process, he showed almost a total disregard of the role of figural elements in the Old Testament, and how readers may understand these with different purposes in mind. More important was a serious misunderstanding of biblical religion, that is to say, as a source of new and more powerful myths; Judaism, which may in large part be described this way, is an intricate and harmonious mixture of history and myth, refigured and reinterpreted through time. He ignored, as well, how the writers of the texts meant to address their immediate audiences and did not necessarily, as

the authors of other kinds of texts had done, seek to address future ones. There was most likely no question in their minds on how the biblical stories might be read differently through the passage of time, as their historical sense was locked in time, not open to change. Future audiences were left with the problem of interpreting the texts, either as inspired, thus shaking them free from criticism, or as texts that were similar to sacred texts in other cultures that also demanded new readings. Voltaire grasped some of the elements of the problem, but he believed that the text writers' short- and long-run projects were identical.

He failed, moreover, to see the other sides of his historical restoration. First, how and why this insignificant tribe's influence had such significant consequences. Second, his reconstruction did not impel him to look at how Judaism had evolved since biblical times. Thus, he endowed Judaism with a timeless quality, and he ended his half-hearted analysis by placing it in a time capsule. According to his logic, Judaism was both a timeless belief system and a process of becoming as exemplified in the dogmas and doctrines of the Catholic Church. While, to be sure, Judaism had to await the forging of a historical dimension, he denied Judaism its own history, yet recognized that Christianity was firmly grounded in history. He unwittingly ended up supporting Christianity's claim that it had firmly broken with Judaism, which was far from his original intention. By believing in the utter unchangeability of Judaism, he reaffirmed its distinctiveness and condemned it as sterile, while Jewish orthodoxy regarded the truths of Hebrew scripture as inimitable and incontrovertible.

But perhaps his most grievous shortcoming was a failure of imagination. He unquestionably understood the power of myth, which he never tired denouncing, but he failed to grasp the part that rituals played in enforcing it, thrusting them aside as primitive and empty. While *Candide* gives full expression to his imagination, he was for the most part so intent in proving that rabbinic Judaism was based on a literal reading of the texts that he could not conceive how the canon could be interpreted in any other way, except as a transparent structure of ridiculous stories. He put to the test the Old Testament narratives, for example, on Abraham, the Tower of Babel, the Flood, and the Golden Calf, and found them failing the tests of his criteria of the real and the improbable. What is more, he did not consistently make it clear when he was in a satiric or in a disputably historical mode.

The result is a highly suspect treatment of Judaism. It does not, however, express an earlier and discredited species of history making, which is accurately labeled as anti-Semitic, inspired by the dogmas of ecclesiastical authority and by the superstitions of popular belief, nor the later modern anti-Semitic forms founded on, among other things, nineteenth and twentieth century racial theories and nationalist rhetoric. It is undeniable that the works in which Voltaire treats Jews contain highly offensive and objectionable passages, but it is hard to make a hard and fast case that his outlook amounted to a brutal *cri de guerre* against Judaism or Jews. On a few

occasions, he wrote of their sufferings and indignities, but the unease and discomfort we feel at the notice he took of them as an undignified people are surely triggered by his attitude that Jews occupied a very low stratum of society. The most that he asked for—disingenuously, it must be emphasized—was that Jews show a preference for philosophy and repudiate an outdated religious tradition. For how could such a debased people, as he believed they were, rise to the heights of philosophy? The call came, ironically, just at the time when similar, though less vehement and more measured appeals, were becoming part of a critical discourse by and among Jews who had adopted the critical sense that came to be identified with the values of the Enlightenment.

Some confusion also arises when Voltaire himself is placed in a continuous historical flow that posits anti-Semitism as an essential and timeless entity, analogous to a pathogen, but one that cannot be eradicated. The other, more alarming analogy was the belief that the Jews are themselves a pathogenic agent that can and should be eliminated. The clouds are not easy to disperse, especially as the fate of Europe's Jews in the last century remains a vivid memory and has been linked by some with the cardinal tenets of the Enlightenment. According to these hostile assessments, it overstressed the reputedly single most important of them, namely, reason, with the power to expand knowledge, achieve truth, and transform society and morals. The saving grace of reason was certainly a notable feature of Voltaire's thought, but he was also aware of its limitations; an awareness which, it should be stressed, was not one of Voltaire's afterthoughts, but grounded in his life's work. The post-modernist attack on truth and reason reaches into the heart of the Enlightenment, but that heart originally was not without its doubts about the capacity of reason to win against all odds, and Voltaire was not afraid to express these doubts. While he admitted them, he never let them arrest his belief in a better world, which was as commanding a faith as the faith he worked to undermine. Both friends and foes of the Enlightenment linked its achievements and shortcomings with the fate of the Jews either as its beneficiaries or its victims. Voltaire unflinchingly believed that its achievements would benefit the Jews, but only if they admitted that such shortcomings as they had were frankly acknowledged as their own responsibility and were prepared to take steps to overcome them. On the most generous reading, we may say that he maintained that, as victims of the past, they had to endure this transformation to ensure that they would cease to be victims in the future. On a less generous reading, he did not, except rarely, think of Jews as victims at all but rather as a people preying on others, as usurers, and hence, as victimizers.

What I owe to Voltairean scholarship, formidable in its traditions and universal in its reach, will be evident to readers. It reaches back to the time of the Enlightenment itself. My debt to its sweep is immeasurable.

As many Jews have done, I have tried to reach out to my own consciousness of, and have gained much from, learning more about the extraordinary diversity of Jewish life throughout its long and changing history. Not the

least of its past are the extraordinary scholarly studies of the Jewish Bible that have embroidered it almost from the very beginning. More pertinent to my inquiry are the contributions of Jews to the world of new thought that the Enlightenment opened up to them, and to the contributions they made and continue to make to Enlightenment itself, and to the ongoing debate about its past and its future. They have called on their past to keep the discourse on the many aspects of Judaism and Jewish identity alive in a world that is hesitatingly, and often in a state of bewilderment, but also with humor, trying to understand the troubled legacy of the Enlightenment.

I have also called on my own past to grasp Judaism's manifold nature. Before I knew it as an adult, I knew it as a child knows it, accepting, yet in time questioning, its outward forms in an immigrant family and neighborhood in Winnipeg, whose Jews were steeped in Yiddishkeit, the culture that for more than two centuries was distinguished by Yiddish, the language of East European Jews. It was spoken in its new setting in a plethora of little synagogues that brought Jews from the same towns in the old country together; in Socialist and Communist Jewish schools; in Zionist and Orthodox Jewish schools; on the Jewish stage; in kosher butcher shops; in garment factories; and in the fraternal organizations providing sick benefits and funeral arrangements. That culture, now almost totally vanished, has stayed with me, startling me with the depth of my remembrance of it long after I moved into a secular world where I began to grasp Judaism's wider manifestations. We know that in the eleventh century, non-Ashkenazi Jews made up ninety-seven per cent of Jews throughout the world. That figure declined over the centuries until the Ashkenazi Jews became the dominant force in the survival of Judaism. Both cultures exist today largely as memories and as subjects in the academy. Yet the self-proclaimed Sephardic superiority over individuals who had backgrounds like mine, lives on; but it now seems more amusing than defining. Claudia Roden relates that her great-uncle, Moussa Doueck, dismissed them impatiently: "Read and write? I have people who read and write for me."[2]

This study had its start when I was preparing a paper on Voltaire and Mendelssohn for a University of Haifa colloquium on "Enlightened Anti-Semitism," organized by Ilana Zinguer, Sam W. Bloom and Harvey Chisick. I put it aside to complete another study. When I resumed my work, it took on new life and evolved as a full-length book whose dimensions exceeded the scope of its smaller beginnings. Many thanks are due to friends who listened to me. Their questions and suggestions forced me to inquire more deeply and to be hard on myself. Ed Hundert was always ready to put his inquiring mind to work. David Bates gave my efforts the benefit of his gift for seeing matters from unusual perspectives. I want also to express my gratitude to Roger Seamon, Mark Glouberman, Harvey Chisick, William Benjamin, Paul Nelles, Kim Adams, Wayne Thorpe, and Carmela Patrias. Ruth's everlasting goodwill tempered my mind and eased my task.

# Abbreviations

Material and citations from L. Moland (ed.) *Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, 52 vols, Paris: Garnier Frères, 1877–95, will be referred to as *OCM* and incorporated in the text.
Other abbreviations of Voltaire's works refer to T. Besterman (ed.) *The Complete Works of Voltaire*, Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1968– and appear in the text as *OC*. The *Dictionnnaire philosophique* comprises vols 35–36.
References in the text to Voltaire's *Treatise on Tolerance*, S. Harvey (ed. and trans.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000 will appear as *TT*.
*SVEC* refers to *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1956–.
References in the text to Baruch Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, S. Shirley (trans.) Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989, will appear as *TTP* and the references to Spinoza's *Ethics*, G.H.R. Parkinson (ed. and trans.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, will appear as *Ethics*.
Translations from Voltaire are my own, unless otherwise indicated. They will, for the most part, appear in the text, as will the French passages. The longer passages in French will appear in the footnotes.

# Introduction

## Enlightenment and its discontents

As is well known, Voltaire was pestered in his very last moments: "Do you believe in the divinity of Christ?" his *curé* asked him; and, not satisfied with Voltaire indicating he wanted to be left in peace, repeated his question. Upon this the dying man was overcome by his final rage: he rebuffed the impertinent questioner angrily: "Au nom du dieu!" he shouted at him, "ne me parlez pas de ce-homme-là !"—immortal last words encapsulating everything this bravest of spirits had fought against.

Voltaire judged that "there is nothing divine about this Jew of Nazareth"; thus, *classical taste* judged through him.

> Classical taste and Christian taste posit the concept "divine" in fundamentally different ways; and anyone who has any classical taste in his body cannot but feel Christianity to be *afoeda superstitio*, and the Christian ideal a caricature and degradation of the divine.
>
> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* R. Bittner (ed.), K Sturge (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, Notebook 11 [95], November 1887–March 1888, p. 216. His italics.

## Voltaire sets the terms of the debate: emancipation as an exit strategy

The luminaries of the eighteenth century in France and elsewhere, who adorned its stages, fiction, poetry, sciences, its breakthroughs in political and moral philosophy and historical knowledge, were hard, indefatigable, and unsparing workers. None was as well known and celebrated as Voltaire, unquestionably the century's most prodigious writer who left a trail, as broad as it was long, of plays, poems, histories, polemics, pamphlets, and thousands of letters. Lately, he has been viewed through different prisms to evaluate his troubled encounter with the biblical Jewish past for which he showed a profound aversion.[1] As for Jews in the eighteenth century, he hardly knew them and made little effort to understand them.[2] For the most part, Voltaire bestowed upon Judaism, as he conceived it from a selection of

texts in the Old Testament, a timeless, yet sterile quality, without pausing to ask how, through the various periods of the Jewish past, it was interpreted, questioned and generally how it fared at the hands of generations of biblical scholars, those who were Jewish and regarded it as sacred and sublime, and non-Jewish exegetes whose responses to it were both negative and positive. Ironically, he was not blind to the interpretative tradition, occasionally indulged in it with mixed results, but, for the most part, he was opposed to Judaism as an obsolete and unique instance of ritual orthodoxy. This, together with his analyses and comments of their history in exile, down to the eighteenth century, forms the subject of the first and lengthier part of this book.

The second part deals with the immediate and longer-term favorable and unfavorable responses to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution seen from a double optique, on the one hand, from the perspective of how friends and foes linked the values, achievements and failures of each with the "Jewish Question," and on the other, from the quest for a redefinition of Jewish identity that would not repudiate Judaism as a religious and cultural tradition but make room as well for a broader and more liberal set of its precepts and practices. The efforts were played out against the background of great intellectual and political change that had far-reaching consequences in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when the "Jewish Question" was given new meanings that culminated in the nearly total destruction of European Jewry. These developments importantly bear the weight of themes that Voltaire examined and upon which he left his indelible imprint. The questions he raised had, to be sure, not been ignored by many others before him. Indeed, Jews and non-Jews had agreed and disagreed on the role of the Jews, as they were depicted in the Old Testament, and, as they were treated after their dispersal through the ages in cultures where they sought refuge and settled.[3] But Voltaire brought to their biblical history and their marginal existence in the Diaspora a new perspective shaped by the principles and prejudices of the Enlightenment. Thus, he embarked on an intellectual journey that would, he argued, find a proper place for them as minor players both in their ancient past and in the modern world. After him, the Jewish past, present and future were subjects of intense concern and were taken up and expanded in several ways in a world transformed by nationalism, heightened ethnic awareness, and war. The Enlightenment credo in these conditions was questioned, indeed, aggressively challenged, no more so than in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

By examining how Voltaire applied the spirit of rational inquiry to Jews, we may see more clearly how his ideas continued to reverberate, whether as a force for good, in the opinion of Jews as well as non-Jews, some of whom saw in him a gentle thinker and a beacon of light, while others, beginning soon after his death in 1778, saw him as an agent of much or all that was thought to be wrong in modern life. Jews who sought to survive as a distinct minority were to be found on both sides of the discourse of praise of, and

blame for, the new situation that liberal toleration presented to Jews, arousing fears in some that Judaism would not survive and hopes in others that survival demanded forms of accommodation. There are, as will be seen, symmetries and asymmetries between Voltaire's approach to Jewish orthodoxy and Judaism itself as its spokesmen on both sides devised protective strategies. There was, however, an imbalance between them. The symmetries consisted in treating Judaism as essentialist and unchanging. The asymmetries are glaring once it is seen that Voltaire's satiric edge and his ridicule of Judaism were intended to reduce its importance, and, indeed, to keep it at the margins of history.

Voltaire's goal to desacralize the biblical past by historicizing it rested on his belief in the power of human reason to advance culture and civilization, indeed, in its power to overcome the impersonal structures of history. He wanted even more strenuously to affirm that the Judaism of the Old Testament shaped the darker side of Christianity. Rarely, if at all, did he defer to believers in the eighteenth century who claimed that Christian spirituality furnished a basis for moral behavior. By identifying purpose and truth with enlightenment, he sought to demolish both Judaism and Christian doctrine as an unsound foundation for understanding humanity. Under their sway, human beings were kept from knowing their true interests. Thus, he set his sights on a double emancipation that would free Jews and non-Jews alike from the weight of religious authority and replace it with a philosophy of rational inquiry productive of social and intellectual progress. It was no easy matter to put such goals before the public, but resistance to new ideas was already wavering before Voltaire came on the scene. Locke and Newton, who were stellar figures for him, had upset the equilibrium established by Christian theology and the support it received from the French state that was itself subject to internal strains due to the fragile foundations of its Gallican policies and the challenges it and the official ecclesiastical authorities faced from Jansenism. Critics of Christian dogma were slowly creating a new foundation of inquiry by means of which the world might be apprehended differently and, they believed, with greater fidelity to the ascertainable facts of natural and social existence. Their individual achievements and their increasing celebrity changed the mental landscape of Europe. The advances in science and philosophy that were channeled through networks of learned societies, their publications, and personal correspondence permeated the consciousness of the European intellectual community and made it more and more receptive to a host of new and heterodox ideas, not all of which went in one direction. Thus, a number of competing views on religion, faith, and reason became a matter of intense debate among the cognoscenti. Voltaire's adulation of Locke and Newton thrust aside, as misleading, the critical works of Spinoza, Bayle, and their radical followers. Voltaire's submission of religious orthodoxy to hard scrutiny is undisputable. But Bayle's and Spinoza's inflexible anti-theistic arguments went too far and threatened to undermine deism. It is curious

that, for all the admiration he bestowed on Locke he did not extend it so far as to account for Locke's respect for the Hebrew Bible, and who, furthermore, in *The Second Treatise on Government*, took from it two ideas: that no ruler had absolute dominion over the earth, and that the Torah was the legal basis on what he had "called in an earlier work the 'national Jewish identity.'"[4]

By contrast, the tiny French Jewish communities, comprising some 40,000 Jews, remained at their core impervious to these momentous intellectual developments. In France, there were no significant lonely figures, such as Baruch Spinoza, who in the previous century took the unprecedented step of defying the elders and protectors of Jewish orthodoxy. They were subject to, and for the most part, willingly embraced strict rules of observance and rabbinic power. Even more important, their survival demanded complex defense strategies, including resistance to intermarriage, as the best assurance against the threats of persecution and periodic violence. They stood on guard against not improbable threats to tighten state regulation and the frightening possibility of new pogroms, both of which could not be dismissed in the light of their past history. It may, therefore, seem odd to bring Voltaire's imposing mind and brilliant ironic wit into collision with a small, beleaguered, defensive and apparently insignificant community that barely touched the concerns of the masses of Frenchmen, except in Paris, small towns and villages in Alsace and the great port of Bordeaux. Despite what might appear to be a historically peripheral problem, the encounter between such unevenly matched antagonists proved to have large consequences. In fact, if it did not move to the center, it no longer remained at the margins. As such it must surely be seen as a question in terms of the Enlightenment itself and in the ways it was taken up in the post-Enlightenment period, especially in the twentieth century when many of its central tenets were called into question and attacked, with some of its critics looking for threads that would link some aspects of the Enlightenment to the criminal actions against European Jews two centuries later.[5] Attempts have been made to establish such connections on the grounds of what has been considered a misplaced and dangerous confidence in the power of reason. Just as important, but not, at first glance, as controversial, is the contrast between the Enlightenment's professed confidence in the universal emancipation of humanity and its ambivalent approaches to non-European cultures, contact with which not only transformed the European economy but also initiated the earliest anthropologic debates on social and racial differences, not excepting Jewish differences, which, however ancient, could not be treated wholly as non-Western in origin.

Voltaire is the pivotal Enlightenment figure in bringing to the surface two questions. The first was the Jewish biblical past. The second was how Jews might be legitimized as rightful citizens as well as subjects. Neither the magisterial Montesquieu, nor the incisive Diderot, nor the brooding and more profound Rousseau, devoted as much energy to the problem, although

none of them, especially Rousseau, neglected it. There is also some irony in the fact that, without quite intending it, Voltaire created, perhaps more than the others, the intellectual conditions that led to Jewish emancipation and an uneasy and troubled history of assimilation in Western and Central Europe, though other causes leading to the enhanced status of Jews were also at work. The intellectual authority of the Old Testament was eclipsed by the time the chief figures of the French Enlightenment (and Enlightenment figures in Britain as well) turned to the question of the nature of the polity. While deploring the Gallican state's close alliance with the Church, Voltaire was not an anti-monarchist, and, it should not be forgotten that what was owing by the state to citizens was thought by defenders of monarchical legitimacy to be dependent on their obedience to it as subjects. What he began as a polemic against Christian doctrine assumed in his biblical criticism, *La Philosophie de l'histoire* and in the *Essai sur les moeurs*, the force of an extended attack against Judaism which culminated in a call for emancipation from obedience to rabbinical authority with its foundations in the Covenant that sanctioned the Jews as the chosen people, and, in turn, served as a foundation for an attack against ecclesiastical authority. Yet, his assault on Judaism was single-minded and took on a life of its own. In his mind, emancipation would mark progress and lead to the virtual disappearance of Judaism altogether. While he could distinguish the various strains of Christianity, Judaism for him was undifferentiated. Near the heart of his anti-Judaism there lay an inability to grasp its heterogeneity, that is, the subtle blending of the particular and the universal; and at the heart of his Enlightenment lay a concept of universalism that necessarily extruded any hint of the various kinds of sources required to maintain community values through ties of kinship and provides their substance. He was less concerned about the fate of Jews than he was seized by an abstraction of Judaism that he believed had to disappear. Voltaire dismissed Jewish resistance as wilful and obdurate, and he implied that rational thought and Judaism were irreconcilable.

After his death, the impulse for change was waged on two fronts, one by reforming bureaucrats within the state apparatus, the other by critics outside it, who came forth with schemes promising greater toleration, some practical and others utopian. The matter of Jewish assimilation, while marginal to begin with, became a matter of serious debate once the larger questions of eligibility for citizenship and representation came under examination. The immediate sources and consequences of emancipation also raised concerns about the meanings of loyalty to community and the struggle for liberation from all illegitimate authority, political and ecclesiastical. How Jews might avail themselves of the tools that would make them citizens of the state and usher them into the modern age thus became an important issue. Assimilation meant different processes and outcomes for Jews and non-Jews. Although assimilation did not exist either conceptually or lexically in Voltaire's time, there was a history of conversion to Christianity—mainly forced;

and in these circumstances it was rarely believed to be genuine. For Voltaire, Christian conversion was, of course, not the route towards "liberation" from Judaism. It had to be voluntary, while no less authentic, though, as we shall see, his attitude even towards the most self-emancipated Jews was ambivalent. Assimilation should not be understood as total absorption or merging[6]—which was a rare Jewish choice in the eighteenth century—but rather a process that, after the Revolution, would in the eyes of Jew and non-Jew alike, though hedged by indecision and prejudice, integrate Jews into the political and cultural mainstream in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.

Assimilation was a long-drawn-out process that in France had many dubious and disastrous endings. Perhaps it is best described in Norbert Elias's historic–sociologic analysis of the civilizing process in Western Europe, and, in France above all, with the transformation of the ancient aristocracy into a controlled court-nobility and the rise of the bourgeoisie, whom he described as turning towards "a cultivation of inwardness and the elevation of spiritual and cultural achievements to a special place in the table of values." The process entailed two phases, one in which individuals rise from the lower to the upper class, and a second phase when groups do. With the increase of social power of the lower group and the relative decline of the upper group, rivalry between the two groups raises the self-consciousness of both. Total assimilation is not accomplished normally in one generation. "In most people," he wrote, "from the aspiring outsider groups the effort to rise inevitably leads to specific deformations of consciousness and attitude." As such, he added, they:

> are known in the Orient and colonies as 'Levantinism'; and in the petty-bourgeois circles of Western Europe they are often enough to be found in the form of 'half-education,' the pretension to be what one is not, insecurity of taste and conduct, 'vulgarity' not only of furniture and clothing but also of the mind: all this expresses a social situation which gives rise to an urge to imitate models of a higher social group.[7]

As a Jew, who dedicated his book to his father who died at Breslau in 1940 and to his mother who, he believed, died at Auschwitz, Elias may have intended his analysis to act as a model to consider Jewish assimilation not only in Germany but also elsewhere in Europe, including France. In France, the Sephardic community, the older and better-assimilated Jews, looked with fear at the Ashkenazim. In consequence of their own social mobility, the latter revived feelings among the former—only superficially repressed to be sure—of "shame and embarrassment." These affects were demonstrably on display in the early phase of acculturation when individuals identified themselves with the established groups ambivalently and with varying degrees of success. Forgetting the strictest rules of civilized sociability brought about feelings of shame, while embarrassment remained at the

center of individual and familial responses to the failed behavior of newcomers.[8] As we shall see, these affects haunted Jews in the halcyon days of acceptance in the last years of the nineteenth century.

Voltaire was fascinated by the processes and direction of civilization, but he did not see them chiefly in terms of class and group differentiation, nor was he not unaware of the rise to social power of the bourgeoisie. His eyes were more fixed on discerning the currents, mainly issuing from the center of monarchical centralized power, that were easing the path to rational discourse and improved social relations. He encompassed his own Enlightenment, if only because it testifies to a long life, the different genres in which he chose to express his work and test his talents—in some of which he superbly excelled—the public causes he supported, and his fierce denunciation of injustice. At the same time, Voltaire's Enlightenment must be placed within the context of the larger Enlightenment whose temporal and intellectual contours seem to be not as sharp as had once been supposed. Such a reorientation is critical if we are to reach further understanding of the Voltairean phase of the Enlightenment—a phase not without its critics, Rousseau and Diderot among them—that veered towards a total repudiation of all forms of clerical power, and that the arguments for such a rejection rested on a total condemnation of Judaism as he portrayed it. The tone was thus set for a peculiar kind of anti-Judaism: it became extremely difficult to determine the differences between an intellectual aversion of it as a seamless and unassailable record of revelation and history, and a simpler anti-Jewish feeling embedded in popular perceptions. To some minds the two were indistinguishable. To condemn one form of anti-Judaism amounted to an illegitimation of the other. To other minds, the two could be kept apart.[9] Other Enlightenment figures did not share these ideas, nor the politics implied by them.

## The changing contours of the Enlightenment

Even if the Enlightenment appears to have acquired metaphoric resonance, its status as a single intellectual movement, uniting thinkers across Europe, who were imbued with an identical ethos that questioned existing institutions, especially those supporting organized religion and theological dogma, still stands, though with serious modifications. The Enlightenment's division into its early, middle, and high periods nevertheless remains a legitimate starting point of inquiry. This heuristic device made it possible to think of the clusters of concerns that were paramount in successive historic periods—concerns that cumulatively gained force but often changed direction as issues that were not raised earlier in a consistent manner, or were only dimly perceived and articulated, assumed greater clarity. In the process, earlier more radical solutions to economic, social, and political problems lost their force or were abandoned. Even if allowances are made for overlappings in time and place, political support for a notion of enlightened despotism, as

was true for Voltaire, gave way to more radical political ideas that focused on a less hierarchical, more republican and democratic political agenda, derived in part, to be sure, from earlier thinkers, but were given different readings in societies experiencing shifts in official policies governing the structure of representative bodies and determining economic development. In an earlier period, Spinoza represented a special case, for alongside his guarded approval of political democracy he did not rule out the necessity under certain conditions of the need for firm authority. By contrast, while Voltaire challenged religious authority, he preferred on the whole the hierarchical structure of political authority, because he put a high price on stability, and because he thought it could be leavened by enlightened ideas to secure social justice.

Jonathan Israel opened a door into the earlier phase of the Enlightenment in his examination of the complex interlacing of politics, theology, and science, looking back to the mid-seventeenth century, and stretching the Enlightenment's reach into the middle of the next. Thus, in the process of reevaluating the phenomenon of the Enlightenment, its familiar features have been looked at anew, while new features have been discerned. Israel not only makes his "Radical Enlightenment" the foundation of all that came after, but also places Baruch Spinoza at its center.[10] In his second volume—and, it is reasonably certain that he will reinforce the claim in the third that is to follow—he insists even more emphatically that the most daring attacks against the social and religious order came from thinkers who increasingly were forced into an underground existence as "atheists," "Spinozists," materialists, or non-providential Deists. From this "emerged the values—democracy, freedom of thought and expression, individual freedom, comprehensive toleration, rule of law, equality, and sexual emancipation—which since the late nineteenth century have increasingly constituted the declared quintessential values of western 'modernity.'"[11] Though this temporal shift has not gained full scholarly consent, there is much to be said for including Spinoza, as one of Voltaire's precursors, even if Voltaire started from a different set of rational premises and sought to shelter himself from Spinoza's radicalism and the general perception, which he shared with others of conservative mind, of him as an atheist. Israel, however, insists on a radical difference between the two, a difference that in his view has been obscured, with the result that the history of the Enlightenment has been distorted, giving undeserved primacy to the moderate turn it took under the influence of such figures as Voltaire.[12]

The Jewish Enlightenment of the eighteenth century steered clearly away even more decisively from an excommunicant like Spinoza. It was the inevitable consequence of the widening range of critical thought that reexamined the roots of Christian dogma, a process that had begun earnestly in the seventeenth century and became *de rigueur* in the eighteenth century.[13] Jewish theology for Voltaire, who almost single-handedly raised anti-Catholic polemic as a standard feature of the French Enlightenment, was

the seedbed of Christian belief, intolerance, and inhumanity. The inspiration for the Jewish Enlightenment was far different. It came from the effort to preserve the Old Testament and make it consonant with the critical spirit of inquiry, while leaving undisturbed the rights of Jews to belong to their own communities.

To these changes that altered the physiognomy of the Enlightenment may be added the contention of scholars, led by John Pocock, that the Enlightenment might be thought of as inclusive of wider European kinships that contributed to a more searching debate on the past and the future of humanity. Just as Israel stretched the Enlightenment back to the middle of the seventeenth century, Pocock extended it to the end of the eighteenth. While his chief purpose was the laying down of criteria for Gibbon's qualifications as "an English giant of the Enlightenment," he reaffirmed the notion of the Enlightenment as a European movement.[14] Not surprisingly, some of the central ideas of the Enlightenment burrowed their way into Jewish consciousness. That the study of the Enlightenment has moved in unexpected directions leaves undisturbed one of its fundamental features—its appeal to a cosmopolitan community of thinkers, some of whom saw as part of their credo and mission the necessity to expand the opportunities for humanity and decency in both national and international spheres. It was the Enlightenment's cosmopolitanism that Ernst Cassirer stressed, calling forth the figures of Lessing, Kant, Herder, and Goethe.[15] We will pause in due course to tie the concept of cosmopolitanism, more appropriately, the concept of universalism in the case of Voltaire, to the existence of ethnic and religious loyalties, especially its Jewish manifestations—the contention, for example, that held in its bosom principles that embraced all of humanity—for which he had little or no regard.

In the wake of Cassirer's perspective, Alfred Cobban took exception to opening wider the window of the Enlightenment to include the German thinkers, but he may have too quickly dismissed them as hostile to the cosmopolitan ideal. He thought it mistaken and odd to enlist on the side of the Enlightenment "the founders of German idealism and nationalism," a point, which is, on the face of it, worth making,[16] because of nationalism's collision with liberalism, but none of the German thinkers can in truth be easily enlisted as single-minded partisans of nationalism. Besides, there is no clear-cut case for banding them together as if they were in specific or even general agreement on these questions. It has been remarked, for example, that Herder was concerned to mitigate what he considered the most egregious aspects of Enlightenment skepticism, with its denial of national and local feeling, warning that it would stimulate rather than subdue old superstitions. An equally important point, however, turns on Herder's "vision of a stateless humanity" that could and ought not to be subsumed under "an amorphous mass of cosmopolitan individuals."[17] Neither Herder nor the other German thinkers, however, were the men, Cobban contended, who brought the ideals of "self-liberation" to the forefront. But, while Cassirer and Cobban took opposite

stances on these problems and issues, the paradox in Cassirer's case—if indeed there is one—is that when he was forced to face the greatest challenge to liberal ideas in his lifetime, there was scarcely any doubt, when he rushed to their defense, that he saw any substantial incompatibility between the leading exponents of the *Aufklärungen* and the principal thinkers of the French Enlightenment. Cobban failed to acknowledge this, just as he failed to consider the different sources of the French and German Enlightenments.

Underlying his differences with Cassirer was Cobban's abiding concern with contemporary trends in political theory and how they were affecting both the study of the Enlightenment and the ways in which it tended to be evaluated in the mid-twentieth century. He pleaded, eight years after his hostile review of Cassirer's work, for a return to the ideas of the eighteenth century "to pick up the threads that were then dropped or broken off" as the only way to restore ethical values which for him meant a revival of "political theory." The Enlightenment was "the most moral of all ages," since it was then that the "debate over moral problems, as distinguished from an unquestioning acceptance of views established by tradition or authority" was most serious.[18] Political theory in the twentieth century, by contrast, had reached a low point, moving further and further away from the founding principles of the Enlightenment. It had never committed the error of trying to derive "its ethics from its history and science," even if occasionally "it mistakenly derived its history and its science from its ethical ideas."[19] Cobban's fears that the ascendancy of political science might displace political theory seem on the surface to have come to fruition. His pessimism, however, is not entirely justified. The study of the history of political thought has brought back a small bit of the Enlightenment's concern with ethics into the discussion of society and government. The continuing interest in the eighteenth century need not be seen as a conscious answer to Cobban's appeal, but the search for the early modern foundations of Western political thought was undeniably one of the turns towards the study of political culture, writ large and exemplified in 50 years or so of the studies by members of the "Cambridge" school that placed key texts in context. As well, as in the work of François Furet, Keith Baker, Robert Darnton, and others, lightly associated with them, the study of the ties between events and ideas, and not only ideas on their own, has provided another avenue to challenge the older way of studying the history of ideas.[20] If this is so, the shift in the study of the Enlightenment from its key intellectual figures has meant a regrettable regression, in the opinion of Jonathan Wright. Notwithstanding criticism of Cassirer's failure to provide an extended discussion of how the idea of philosophy "as sovereign maker of the world" was translated into "concrete instances,"[21] interpretation of the Enlightenment must be based, he says, on how its key thinkers—not in unison, of course—laid down the principles and helped determine the manifold tones in which the exchange of ideas arising from the specific philosophic contexts that were then in circulation, and how individual

assessments of political, economic, and social conditions may be seen; and this cannot be fully appreciated if the French Enlightenment is seen principally as the gateway to the Revolution and all that came after, for it denies its integrity and diminishes its importance.

Cobban put it succinctly many years ago. "The influence of the Enlightenment cannot be disregarded in any history of the French Revolution; but the revolutionaries did not set their course by its light in the beginning, nor did they steer the ship of state into the haven of the Enlightenment in the end."[22] Philosophy for Cobban was not alone, it should be added, the crucially single origin of political ideas in action. He also found them in the practical work of the *parlements* and the ministers of state in France, which gave life to the issues that became the subject of intense moral and political debate; but while he could not ignore the ways in which philosophy and politics were linked, it was left to others to explore the conduits joining them. Although he praised Tocqueville for his attempts to wrest from the administrative records clues leading to the movement for reform,[23] he failed to pick up a number of clues that reveal how Tocqueville tried to link the general ideas of the Enlightenment and the newly potent force of opinion through which they were assimilated by a widening public consciousness, due to the writings, not only of the *philosophes*, but also of the bureaucratically minded physiocrats, who were advocates of centralized authority as the supreme expression of reason—the reason that, in the philosophy of these men of letters, he lamented was the unchallengeable guide to truth.[24] Not least, and present in impressive numbers, there were the pamphleteers acting for and against the regime. Everything was now open to inspection; everything was laid bare. The march to a "société imaginaire" radiated throughout society as 1789 approached. Hegel was to write that "Never since the sun has stood in the firmament and the planets revolved around her, has it been perceived that man's existence centers in his head, i.e., in thought, inspired by which he builds up the world of reality."[25] Jürgen Habermas set himself the task of discovering how the public sphere was expanded, from which point its spillover into revolutionary politics that built on slogans and symbols which were understood and received in a myriad of ways, became part of a later scholarly agenda.[26]

Only the most intrepid would insist on a complete severance of the links between the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. The point, however, is to acknowledge that, while something like a rupture separates one from the other, their parameters will probably never be precisely measured, and even the threshold uniting them may never be clearly crossed or perceived. We will see in Chapter 6, when we discuss Hegel's attitude to Judaism, the Enlightenment, and the Revolution, how he tried to overcome this dilemma, in sharp contrast to those of his contemporaries, like Burke, Maistre, and de Bonald, who also had firm ideas on the subject, and, from an anti-Enlightenment perspective, categorically denied that there were any chinks of light through which unforeseen facts and events might influence the flow of history.

Rudolph Vierhaus has aptly noted that the problem's historic and philosophic dimensions cannot be simply seen either as causal or consequential. For him, and, as we shall see, for others in the aftermath of the Second World War, it was the ambivalence towards the Enlightenment over its "true" meaning, expressed by its leading lights at the time, that shaped the Revolution. "It created," he says, "a new consciousness of time and unleashed an unending debate on the Enlightenment that focused on its responsibility for the Revolution."[27]

When Voltaire spoke about philosophy as the starting point for understanding natural phenomena and human beings, he was making the same points as other *philosophes*. More than them, however, he did not seek shelter from, but rather was intent on engaging with, the world, and quite explicitly, with ordinary life, the moral and emotional, no less than the political. The role in which he saw himself was the role in which, as a contributor to the *Encyclopédie*, he defined the *philosophe*, a person for whom "reason is . . . what grace is to the Christian," an individual who would not be tyrannized by the passions, for example, of fanaticism and superstition, but find ways of putting them to reasonable use. He occupies the middle ground as a public philosopher, a publicist rather than as the kind of philosopher who shuts himself away from the affairs of the world. Civil society is for the *philosophe* a "divinity" transferred to this world. He honors it by paying exact attention to its needs. Probity as much as an enlightened mind marked him out from others.[28] As such, Voltaire was a practical thinker—a person whom we would today call a public intellectual. In his analysis of the role of Jews in the world of the eighteenth century, he brought before public consciousness questions that went to the very core of the Enlightenment's moral and political commitment to foster a spirit of inclusive humanity.

His universalism, however, stopped short of full inclusivity on two grounds. It was, as we will see, non-egalitarian, on the one hand, and, on the other, it excluded peoples who remained in a presumably static or primitive stage of human development and did not meet the social and intellectual criteria of civilized life, despite his admiration for Eastern civilizations, especially China. Jewish culture, past and present, could not be located in either classification. Indeed, he was highly ambivalent about the inclusion of Jews. It is true that the tests of critical thinking he asked them to raise as a standard of intellectual clarity were the same as those he demanded of non-Jews, but he could not fully accept the possibility that Jews could shed their beliefs and practices in favor of science and philosophy. He was never clear on how to define the separate domains of the private and the public, and he did not quite lay out the scaffolding between the passage from one to the other, nor did he say how Jews, or for that matter how other groups, might live, not anxiety-free, but with minimum comfort in each. Kinship and custom were, for him, irrelevancies. In this respect, as we delve more deeply into this question, we shall see whether Voltaire meets all the conditions of enlightened thinking laid down in Habermas's reasonable

argument that "privatized individuals . . . , by communicating with each other in the public sphere of the world of letters confirmed each other's subjectivity as it emerged from their spheres of intimacy," are the "cultivated persons" whom he endows with an "abstract universality [that] afforded the sole guarantee that the individuals subsumed under it would be considered in an equally abstract fashion'as 'common human beings.'" These presumably are the individuals who relinquish all preexisting social and political rules and adopt the universal rules that govern critical debate obeying the demands of reason, what Habermas calls "the morally pretentious rationality that strove to discover what was at once just and right."[29] Habermas will not countenance such arrogance; at the same time, he will not yield to irrationalism. At this point, we may say that Voltaire, by excluding Jewish orthodoxy as antithetical to the goals of science and philosophy, and hence to reason, is the very model of the Enlightenment thinker. Moreover, he closed his mind just when he needed it to question his own preconceptions and prejudices. We shall see, in addition, whether the model satisfies in every respect all the criteria that Voltaire himself chose to describe the man of letters. The latter is an individual, he writes in the *Encyclopédie*, with wide knowledge. Even if no man is capable any longer to become expert in various fields, he cannot confine himself exclusively to one lest he lose his claim to know much and acquire more than a minimum competence from serious study and wide reading. The method was the kind of critical inquiry capable of destroying:

> all the prejudices with which society was afflicted: astrologers' predictions, the divining of magicians, all types of witchcraft, false prodigies, false marvels, and superstitious customs. This philosophy has banished the thousands of childish disputations which had formerly been dangerous and have now become objects of scorn. In this way men of letters have in fact served the state. It is astonishing at times that what used to cause upheavals in the world no longer disrupts it; and for this we are indebted to authentic men of letters.[30]

Enlightenment, at least in the Western world, was predicting a victorious struggle against the enchanted world of a benighted past.

One of the aspects of Voltaire's world, which demands a revisit, is the way in which he received Bayle and Spinoza, who laid the groundwork for the early Enlightenment; how they shaped his thought; and why he rejected their more incisive critiques of prevailing religious and political orthodoxies. As he was close enough in spirit to them, it is important to clarify the nature of their relationship before an understanding of the many currents of the Enlightenment and the diversity of Jewish responses to it can be reached. These problems will be indicated Chapter 1, which serves as a brief prologue to the book. His intellectual affinities and differences with them are treated *inter alia* in successive chapters as a reminder that, while he

welcomed their ideas on dogmatic and revealed religion, he could not go so far as to risk harboring atheism. On another level, he could not accept their more radical views on the nature and goals of political authority.

Chapter 2 introduces the notions of image-making and the cognitive role of imagination in perceiving the sources of Jewish communal traditions, beliefs, and rituals. The phenomena of images and imagination constitute a crucible in which Jewish and non-Jewish ideas of community both collided and converged. Non-Jews at times proved capable of nuanced responses to Jews, while insisting on their differences, to which Jews responded by defensively reaffirming them. From these experiences arose the incipient, though more sophisticated, notions of essentialism, particularism, and universalism, which Voltaire deployed to depict the Jewish past and to predict their problematic future. These constructs set down the foundations and appeals for emancipation and assimilation, which remain the focal point of modern identity debates.

In Chapter 3, Voltaire's *Essai sur les moeurs* is seen as a key source for his ideas of Jews throughout their history from biblical times to his own day. With borrowings from contemporary anthropology, Voltaire set out to demythologize the Old Testament version of history, and attempted to question the guardians of the Jewish past, who, he argued, had distorted its history, and to place it instead within a wider cross-cultural comparative context in order to destroy its privileged status. His philosophy of history, his proto-anthropology, and his attempt to see the European and non-European parts of the world in grand outline in which he situated the Jews, were intended to diminish their importance by putting great stress on their small number, the primitiveness of their cults, and, as well as, for him, their lack of originality. His aim was to demonstrate how civilization, freed from myth and doctrinaire religion allied to an unenlightened bureaucratic state, rested necessarily on an increasing awareness of the benefits of an expansive sociability, sensitive to letters, science, philosophy, and art. His theory of change and his concept of progress, however, made no room for a Jewish presence in the modern world. The chapter argues that Voltaire turned a blind eye to many of the realities of Judaism. While trying to place Jews in history and time, he saw them as unchanging and, indeed, as timeless, leaving little room for them to exist as real people.

Chapter 4 considers how Voltaire saw the roles played by Jews in the commercial history of the eighteenth century, and demonstrates how close his thinking was to the political economists of his time, but more particularly how others, including Montesquieu, the Dutch Jewish economist, de Pinto, and contributors to the *Encyclopédie*, such as Jaucourt, perceived the economic role of the Jews in the eighteenth century. I argue that he does not provide, as some of his contemporaries did, an adequate account of Jewish importance in the developing economies of Europe and overseas.

Chapter 5 allows us to see Voltaire at work as a historian, this time, more as a critic of the Old Testament, which he denigrated as an unverifiable

source of the Jewish past. He chose to ridicule literal readings of the Old Testament, but he was not beyond accepting them to make a case against its bloodier narratives; and he did so at the cost of ignoring, for the most part, figural interpretations. His goal was to paint as negative a picture of the ancient Jews as possible. He disputed the Old Testament's historic accuracy, which was fairly easy to do, and, above all, he challenged it as a testament of divine revelation. His strength as a historian was undermined by a theory of change and progress that left little or made no room for a Jewish presence in the modern world.

The unfinished business of how to evaluate the many manifestations of assimilation, its inherent instability, and its ambiguities is considered in Chapter 6. The nature, promise, and unsettled outcome of the Enlightenment project, and the solution to the "Jewish Question," which it was imagined would be one of assimilation's unqualified successes, have not lost their immediacy as a historic problem nor as an ethical one whether in its religious or secular forms.[31] These questions stirred up multiple and conflicting responses. Among some Jews, they led to a personal history of conversion, while, for others, they led to halfway measures which redefined Judaism as a universal creed in its own terms, while insisting on its singularity, though not its absolute uniqueness. The inherent contradictions of the formulation were intolerable for some Jews, but not for others who found them inescapable and indeed acceptable. In the process, Jews encountered some hostility from both the Left and the Right, and often for the same reasons, however much the former declared themselves friends of the Enlightenment. In their criticism of Jews, the Left displayed anti-capitalist sentiments under the banner of versions of Enlightenment values. On the Right, thinkers such as Maistre and de Bonald combined pre- and anti-Enlightenment values and anti-Jewish passions.

Chapter 7 brings the story down to the present, but not as it has been generally viewed in a linear way that rests on an analysis of the acculturation of Jewish communities within the boundaries of separate nation-states. Nor is there an attempt to introduce sociologic and demographic materials charting rates of intermarriage, increase and decreases in synagogue attendance, and the like, to measure the ups and downs of Judaism, which rests on the assumption that it is a static notion and condition. The first subject is far too vast to be covered here.[32] And, despite the commonsense notion that education, home influences, and general culture determine attitudes, they cannot, except reductively, throw light on subjective experience. The Israeli experience also does not figure in my book, except marginally, whether in its earliest Zionist roots or in its manifestations since the founding of the state in 1948. Its history demands and continues to receive special treatment. However, my focus does not mean or imply that I am unaware that the survival of Israel is not of immense psychologic importance to Jews who seek to live their lives outside Israel and identify themselves differently, but still as Jews. My book calls on the reflections of some key figures,

Jewish and non-Jewish, whom I have drawn from the world of scholarship in the history of ideas and political thought, and, in a few instances, from the worlds of imaginative literature, philosophy, and psychology. As a general rule, I have chosen to look at individuals whose central concern is the relationship between, in the case of Jews, their Judaism and Jewishness and the principles of the Enlightenment; and, in the case of non-Jews, I think it is of some value to see how they responded both to the Enlightenment and to the enhanced opportunities for Jews to make their presence known and felt in an increasingly tolerant period of European history, which gradually and almost without warning turned to dust. I examine some of the earliest reactions to the Holocaust, and then go on to comment and reflect on more recent individual efforts to explain and define Judaism and Jewishness in a time when the seemingly untroubled forms of assimilation of an earlier period have been reevaluated and are no longer taken for granted as a satisfactory answer to the "Jewish Question." I deal with these questions with an eye on how friends of the Enlightenment are grappling with the problem of rethinking and revitalizing it to discover ways to rescue it.

# Part I

# 1 Spinoza, Bayle, and Voltaire

## Issues in contention

Then a little Jew, long-nosed, and of pallid complexion
Poor, but fulfilled, thoughtful and secluded
Of a discerning and profound mind, less read than praised.
Concealed under Descartes' mantle, his master.
Walking in measured steps, he approaches the Great Being.
"Pardon me," he says, speaking to him, his voice low.
"But, between ourselves, I think that you don't exist.
I believe I have proved this with my mathematics.
I must deal with unimaginative scholars and their faulty judgments:
Judge us . . . " With these words, the earth trembled.
And in horror and in fright, Saint Thomas withdrew.
But God, indulgent and good, taking pity on this infidel
Simply gave orders to have his mind cleansed.
Unable in future to agree on the price
He took his leave escorted by a few subtle minds.

Alors un petit Juif, au long nez, au teint blême,
Pauvre, mais satisfait, pensif et retiré,
Esprit subtil et creux, moins lu que célébré,
Caché sous le manteau de Descartes, son maître
Marchant à pas comptés, s'approche du grand Etre.
"Pardonnez-moi," dit-il en lui parlant tout bas,
"Mais je pense, entre nous, que vous n'éxistez pas.
Je crois l'avoir prouvé par mes mathématiques.
J'ai de plats écoliers et de mauvais critiques:
Jugez-nous . . . " A ces mots, tout le globe trembla,
Et d'horreur et d'effroi, saint Thomas recula.
Mais Dieu, clément et bon, plaignant cet infidèle,
Ordonna seulement qu'on purgéat sa cervelle.
Ne pouvant désormais composer pour le prix,
Il partit, escorté de quelques beaux esprits.

Voltaire, *Les Systèmes* (1772)
(in *OCM,* 10, 170–72).

The earth did indeed tremble. Voltaire's poem on the philosophical systems of the world captures a partial image of Spinoza. He ironically defends yet gently steps aside from him, leaving the "atheistic" infidel to God's justice. Admiration is not absent, as we may also see in his polemic in *Le Philosophe ignorant*: "Spinoza has done what no Greek philosopher, still less any Jew, has done. He has employed an imposing geometric method to bring clarity to his ideas" (*OC*, 62, 57–64).[1] The rest of the passage, sprinkled with ridicule, moves from admiration to deflation, as he complains about Spinoza's reputed materialism, atheism, and idle metaphysics that had led him to an erroneous set of theorems about Providence, God, materiality and the human spirit, which, because of his obscurities and sophisms, detracted human beings from the task of understanding their true nature. Then, taking back his praise of Spinoza's geometric method, he chastises him for surrendering to its rigidities, instead of dealing honestly with arguments supporting the existence of divine Providence. Spinoza did so in good faith, to be sure, but he was too full of his own ideas, a human weakness that, Voltaire magnanimously adds, afflicts all humankind. In both his epistle and his more extended but limited thoughts on the state of philosophy, Voltaire took aim at Spinoza's affirmation of a discredited Cartesianism. He stated confidently that the Cartesian system had produced Spinoza's.[2] The attack on Spinoza was to elicit a polite scolding from Melchior Grimm, (1723–1807), the editor of the *Correspondance littéraire*, who took him to task for his superficial treatment (*OCM*, 7, 49).

Voltaire's intellectual debt to and difference from Spinoza, and his relationship to his ideas, are not easy to untangle. It is to this question we will turn first, to be followed by a consideration of how he, Spinoza and Bayle regarded the Enlightenment's encounter with Judaism. Interpretation of Spinoza's philosophy has never been easy, as he appeared to many, during his lifetime and for generations after his death, to be on opposing sides of difficult questions, whether on the nature of religious belief or on what grounds he took issue with conflicting notions of God, on the nature of authority and civil and political liberty, and other philosophical problems. Spinoza and Voltaire took different positions on science, the philosopher insisting that a theoretical framework was needed to test observed data and confirm the laws of nature, while the French thinker maintained that empirical evidence was the basis of verifiable knowledge. To take only one instance, Francis Bacon and the Royal Society's commitment to experimentalism Spinoza rejected, while Voltaire welcomed, both. If Spinoza's philosophy was, as Voltaire believed, founded on outdated metaphysics, he may nevertheless be regarded as an empiricist in his own unique way, if we see, first, his textual empiricism as the foundation for a critical basis for the questioning of religious belief; and, second, if we view his materialism as grounded in empiricism. And though Voltaire also distinguished between the certainties of the natural sciences and the uncertain knowledge of the human past with which historians had to contend, he was more ready to put his

trust in the first than in grand theories, especially those based on metaphysics, though his own philosophy of history aimed to remove human experience from the grip of myth, one of Spinoza's chief contributions to biblical criticism. Voltaire's relationship to Spinoza, however, remains unclear.

We should note that Spinoza's influence, or more properly, Spinozism, was a clandestine cult, already in existence before the end of the seventeenth century, diffused through various thinkers, some of whom were sympathetic, while others bound themselves to Spinoza with many reservations; but for the most part, they were not up to the task of understanding his philosophical challenges. Generally, the reception accorded to Spinoza was hostile. There are, however, a few substantial traces that, even if clouded in obscurity, show that Voltaire had what might be called a negative "affinity" for some of his ideas, insofar as he believed it important to take Spinoza's more accessible ideas seriously enough to try to refute them. This may be surmised in the occasional notes of admiration in the last dozen or so years before his death, when, breaking through his earlier glacial response, he defended him against his most egregious detractors.[3] In the brief pages on Spinoza in *Le Philosophe ignorant*, Voltaire summoned Bayle's authority, among others, to dismiss contemporary Spinozists, and, by implication, Spinoza as well. It was largely because of his acceptance of the belief in Bayle's association of Spinoza with atheism, which became his identifying mark and carried a warning sign to steer clear of such a dangerous thinker, that Voltaire formed his negative judgment. But he was equally critical of what he called Bayle's unfair treatment of Spinoza—without specifying why he thought this to be so—except to say that Bayle was contemptuous of all systems of thought. It is, however, almost certain that Voltaire meant to question Bayle's unqualified skepticism, for he could not fathom how anyone could doubt Newton's advancement of truths about the physical universe. Skepticism was all very well, he told a correspondent, in matters of theology.[4]

Voltaire did not bother himself to look deeper into the ways in which Bayle interpreted and how he may have misinterpreted Spinoza's ideas. That Bayle singled out some of Spinoza's contradictions but failed to identify his crucial ones, is Leszeck Kolakowski's contention, and that Richard Popkin goes further by accusing him of making "a complete mess of the discussion of Spinoza's philosophy," and making "no effort to find a clear meaning to what Spinoza was proposing," underlines the difficulties in assessing both Bayle's philosophy and his intentions.[5] Voltaire was content to say that neither Bayle nor Spinoza was to be taken seriously anymore. Metaphysics, he said unreservedly, was dead and of no interest for humankind, governed as human beings were throughout time by the facts of custom and quotidian realities. This was also unquestionably the end-point of Bayle's search for the meaning of facts and how they can be isolated. These questions were, as we shall see, a central preoccupation in Voltaire's studies of the past. What is more, contrary to Voltaire's characterization of him as a metaphysician, we should remember

that Bayle was concerned with the distinction between historical and metaphysical certitude, and that he was no adherent of rational systems, as Ernst Cassirer states.[6] Popkin is of the same mind: "Bayle, while providing the arsenal of the Enlightenment, the weapons and the ammunition that were to be fired at the opponents of the Age of Reason, had no illusion, himself, about what man's reason could accomplish."[7] Bayle also laid the foundation for a philosophical anthropology.[8] Spinoza's philosophy thus reached Voltaire mainly through indirect and sometimes distorted channels, though, according to the editors of the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, he did have direct knowledge of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (*OC*, 36, 386 note 2). He attacked Spinoza indirectly by focusing, not on his philosophy which he knew imperfectly and rather shallowly, but on his reputed atheism, distinguishing it from the ancient atheists as being far more radical and far more dangerous (*OCM,* 18, 365). At the same time as he placed Spinoza among the atheists, he harshly condemned him for always speaking of an infinite and supreme being: Spinoza was invoking the wrong kind of God—a God that was not separate from nature, but at one and the same as nature, a God that was simultaneously matter and thought, a God that was both active and passive, a God that was the source of happiness and evil. In short, Voltaire challenged his single-substance theory. Such a God could not exist at all: "He heralds God, but only by setting out to destroy him" (*OCM*, 26, 524, Lettre X sur Spinosa).[9]

Was Voltaire repelled more by this "God-intoxicated man" as Novalis described him, or by his supposed atheism? Spinoza's multiple faces were too much for Voltaire to grasp, and make sense of. He did praise him, on the other hand, for his stoic acceptance of his excommunication and his modesty, but above all for his repudiation of Judaism—a decision that sat well with him. He was after all "a poor dejudaised Jew," (*OCM*, 18, 367) not unlike Uriel da Costa whom he commended for repudiating "Judaism for philosophy," but failed to mention the turmoil that led to da Costa's suicide after years of self-questioning on Judaism's meaning, then returning to, and finally repudiating, it (*OCM*, 26, 521–22). Nor, in his praise for Orbio de Castro, a Marrano Judaiser, whom he totally misrepresented as a kind of proto-Spinoza, is there any acknowledgement of Orbio's efforts to encourage the Marranos in Amsterdam to adapt themselves to "an alien extrinsic order," alien because it was "never an integral part of their lives or upbringing."[10] Instead, he marveled at Orbio's ability to debate several questions of Jewish and Christian dogma with Phillip van Limborch, the Arminian theologian (*OCM*, 26, 515–21, Lettre IX, "Sur les Juifs").

Had he been more rigorous and more imaginative, he might have appreciated that Spinoza had already raised, as a thought experiment, the vastly more important question of whether Jews as individuals could live in a secular society once they turned their backs on their ancient tribalism and abandoned Judaism—the Halachic laws, the legal portions of the Torah, and, as well, any ruling according to Jewish law, including its observances

and its rituals, not excluding the rabbinic disputes over the interpretation and meaning of Scripture. The Halacha was the corpus of prescriptive written and oral law intended to demand of Jews that they must govern their lives in accordance with its detailed injunctions on their physical and spiritual well-being. Spinoza's repudiation of these traditions was uncompromising, and he gambled that human beings could only achieve full emancipation in a world that would abandon the particularities of family and tribe. He was proposing no less than a revolutionary shift from a survival strategy encoded in a framework of protective laws—mainly in the form of prohibitions—to this higher ground as a precondition for the pursuit of philosophy, drawing a heavy line between what it deemed authoritative, and the questionable criteria used to determine scriptural authority. Philosophy might not replace religion, but it had to remain distinct from it. On the consequences of the necessary divide that he stated should exist between theology and philosophy, Spinoza ran into some difficulties, namely, the fact that theologians, including the Rabbis, did not eschew reason when they discussed religion. But both philosophy and natural reason were, he declared—though this was not a wholly satisfactory solution—accessible to all human beings and were the best weapons against organized religion, in contrast with which he posited the notion of authentic faith, a "true" religion, one that would be "freed again from all superstition" (*TTP*, Ch. 11, p. 204). At that point, religion and philosophy must part and thereafter would occupy separate domains.

Even as Spinoza suffered excommunication for his heretical views, refused conversion, and lived as a secular Jew, which should have met Voltaire's conditions for the pursuit of knowledge and the practice of philosophy, Voltaire could not, it seems, make the mental leap to see that, besides his conviction that Judaism of any kind and philosophy were irreconcilable—a theme that was a distinctive feature in his quiver of anti-Jewish sentiments—his aversion to all aspects of Judaism might cloud his judgment. Of this possibility, he could not, of course, have been fully conscious. He decided to embark on another journey. He was more concerned, not with the origins of religious belief, than with the deadly consequences of belief in revealed religion in Western history. Even once it was stilled and contained by the burgeoning power of scientific observation, the question of how Jews, liberated from their bondage to its absurd beliefs and demands, would fare in a secularized world remained troubling. Voltaire did not show much anxiety about this problem. He did not work out the differences between conversion and assimilation and how one could achieve the second without undergoing the first. Assimilation was identified almost solely with conversion in the conditions of post-Reformation and counter-Reformation Europe, but it was losing its religious justification, and even more so in the eighteenth century when it took on a different meaning. It did not mean leaving one religious faith for another, but rather, perhaps most radically, leaving religious faith behind. As an option, it could be approached only

with hesitant steps. Spinoza's decision to abjure Judaism in the seventeenth century, even in the relatively liberal atmosphere of Amsterdam, must be seen as the work of an independent thinker, who asserted his autonomous self in a world in which communities and individuals found it hard, if not impossible, to identify themselves outside the constraints of religious belief.[11]

Bayle took a different view on both problems, but his major concern focused on the tension between the binary opposites of reason and faith that he maintained constituted the core of philosophical inquiry. As Judaism pits the absolute authority of its laws against individual moral judgment and reason, it cannot begin to answer the demands of philosophy.[12] In Voltaire's case, however, the resulting issues were simplified. There is something very telling in the bad faith that is so apparent in his calculatingly *faux* innocent response to his Jewish contemporaries whom he advised to exchange the fictions of Judaism for the enlightening power of philosophy, even if they had no choice, as he put it, but to go on living as Jews, beckoning them in the name of assimilation to give up Judaism in favor of philosophy dedicated to the practice of reason and the goals of universalism. Assimilation was the direct descendant of the quarrel between the theological elements of Judaism and the goals of philosophy, and it is in this light that Voltaire's harsh rejection of Judaism should in part be seen.

The problems that Spinoza's actions raised in the seventeenth century spanned more than one century. Spinoza posited assimilation as a solution for individual Jews, but could not, quite understandably, see how all might move in that direction. He did, however, imagine a humanistic universalism as a goal the achievement of which would bring some peace to a world plagued by religious sectarianism harmful to political and social order. Such a future might mark the beginning of something approaching what might be called a species of secular liberalism buttressed by the state that would be neither Christian nor Jewish and would take no account of the theological differences between them.[13] Voltaire's hopes for humanity rested on reason that was given special tasks and the means to achieve them that were specific to the level of world awareness of eighteenth century thinkers. It was not the reason of the scholastics, the metaphysicans, or the seventeenth century philosophers who, adding to the original certain proposition, created a chain of knowledge, but the reason that was verifiable by facts, the reason of empiricism, an instrumental, pragmatic, utilitarian and liberating reason.[14] The powers Voltaire gave to these modes of reason would be used to bring to light all the sources of resistance to human improvement, not least those that found their origins in an unchanging Judaism. In committing himself to these beliefs, he found a place for history, not simply, though largely, as a collection of errors, but as the material and spiritual context in which to evaluate how reason might reveal itself through history. At the same time, he remained wedded to the idea that human rationality is timeless and endowed with powers of an immutable kind, occupying a neutral

space free from any past uses and abuses of reason, though subject presumably to tests of coherence and argument.

There were, of course, many changes, dictated by the course of time and fresh contexts along the way from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from a period of political and theocratic absolutism to the time when Jews in the nineteenth century and for the first one-third of the twentieth reaped unimagined benefits from liberal institutions and nation-states. Some took up the cause of Jewish nationalism when European liberalism, overwhelmed by extreme forms of nationalism and xenophobia, failed to meet the promises of the Enlightenment. Political Zionism promised a brighter future for some. For others, the cosmopolitan ideal was linked to the cause of socialism in the Russian Empire. After the Revolution, they played a prominent part in the Soviet Union until a thinly disguised brand of Soviet anti-Semitism reduced them to second-class citizenship, The migration of millions of Jews to Israel and the West ended the honeymoon. French Jews, like their fellow Jews in other parts of Western Europe, became more fully integrated, but maintained a watchful eye. But no more so than in the United States may it be said that Jews prospered and benefited from an open society without losing or having to give up their Jewishness.

In the next chapter, we will consider what may be called the beginnings of a more modern sensibility on the part of Jews and non-Jews to the changing images and perceptions each had of the other, and what each expected from the other when and if prevailing attitudes might give way to new ones.

# 2 Images, Imagination, Tolerance and the Uses of Reason

## The power of images and imagination

In his celebrated *Treatise on Tolerance*, Voltaire presents a narrative of the irrational sources of religious bigotry, intolerance, and fear in Christian and non-Christian societies. It is, however, not religion as such that he condemns. He was far more interested in the ways in which religion descended into the dangerous realms of fanaticism, which proved to be injurious both to religion and society. By extending his analysis beyond Christianity's frontiers, he also argued that civil tolerance of religious diversity would be of immense value for peoples around the globe. If, as he believed, the expansion of human reasoning power was crucial in mastering nature's secrets and significantly reducing the grip of irrationality that perpetuated myth and unwholesome religion, did he allow any role for the imagination in the pursuit of human enlightenment? The question poses some difficulty and does not promise an unambiguous answer, but it must nevertheless be asked, for the imagination is, within any given social and anthropologic framework, one of the sources of the images that human beings carry around with them as they measure one another and determine the ways in which they affect one another as friendly or hostile. By introducing the question of how Voltaire, whose lodestar presumably was unfettered reason, approached the problem of imagination, we will better be able to see the extent to which he relied on the power of the former to dispel darkness.

Voltaire recognized the overwhelming evidence of human weakness, and realized, without quite knowing how, that the judgments human beings make of one another rest on conflicting, contradictory, and confusing images. The image is, we might say, the necessary building block of the imagination, and bears some relationship to what goes on in the world outside ourselves. Whether the images are benign or malign, they are the means by which individuals and groups dimly come to know each other. Of the imagination, Voltaire said that it—and this was true as well of the faculties of perception, memory, and judgment—is impossible to separate as distinct faculties that would confine the first to imagining, the second to feeling, the third to remembering, and the last to judging. The human mind

does all of these, and we can only know them by their effects ("Imagination," *OCM,* 19, 434). He differentiated between what he called the passive and active imaginations. The first is independent of reflection and is the source of human passion and error. It determines our will and keeps us in a state of servile and infantile dependency. The second is linked to the faculties of reflection and memory, and the capacity to combine various facts into creative patterns. It is a gift with which some are endowed, while others must live without it. Though he is tentative in declaring that the imagination may be the only instrument with which the mind conceives ideas, he says that no matter how creative human beings are they can only modify them, because the active imagination lies fundamentally outside of human beings as does also, he adds, the passive imagination. He seems to have forgotten that he endows the active imagination with will and judgment, capable of correcting errors. It ensures that everything it creates possesses order.[1] Thus, it would seem that the divided imagination that Voltaire posited was, by his own account, in fact not so clearly demarcated. Furthermore, his own imagination would, according to his theory, be subject to the same achievements and the same limitations; and, as such, it could not fail to be a fallible guide in tracking and eliminating passion and error. But if this was a shortcoming, imagination had, as he put it, a more positive side, one if harnessed to reason, could enable people to delve into the springs of self-knowledge and foster human improvement.

Bearing in mind Voltaire's constant reminders that human incredulity had roots deeper than reason, and given his own creative imaginative powers—he had many rivals in his century but few matched the elegance of his comic spirit, nor were they able to conjure up such bizarre situations and grotesqueries—I suggest that, as a way of knowing, believing and feeling, the imagination is a useful concept that can lead us into his world of ideas and images of Jews. Some of them came close to the fantastic; he was after all a master fabulist. This is one side of his imagination. The other side was, in his own words, that aspect of his imagination he called upon as he completed the *Treatise on Tolerance* before sending it to the printer. He explained how in trying to reach a wide public, he had to appeal to the heart to expose intolerance as absurd, ridiculous, and horrible. Unlike Bayle's work, which he found abstruse and too long, he was writing, he confided, a shorter work that would be "accessible to everyone," and to meet his goal, he wrote, he had spent much time cutting, correcting, and adding. The fear of being disliked led, he wrote, to the extinction of the imagination (*OC*, 109, D10930, Voltaire to Jacob Vernes, January 20, 1763, 426–27). Voltaire seems to be calling on his muse to assist him in a work of analysis of moral and political intent. It reveals his more reflective self inasmuch as, in his determination to set roadblocks against the powers of an unenlightened state and organized religion, he believed that he could do nothing less than to appeal to the widest band of public opinion. He did not, however, perceive the problem of how governance, manifested in

institutions of authority and obedience, was related to the awakening, or rather, the cultivation of an educated public opinion, one that would do away with false images. He could go no further than put his trust in enlightened rule in the hope that it would grasp the initiative and serve as a benevolent support for an enlightened public. It may also be very well that Voltaire, who kept in mind Bayle's fear that too radical a questioning of the state and the submission of its institutions to the fullest blasts of criticism, were too dangerous and remained so, honed his skills as a satirist and story teller, to protect himself against the state's full powers of persecution. To protect himself further, he embarked on his long histories, which were a device to deflect the eye of the censors as well as being one of his favorite genres in his search for truth. Thus, in his calculations, the sphere of public opinion should be expanded, and Voltaire reached out to co-opt it, to make it subject to reason, and thereby enhance its critical power. From the appearance of Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* in 1697, reason had become intricately and crucially associated with *critique*. This lay behind Voltaire's belief that public opinion had to be rescued from those who had usurped it (*OCM*, 20, 135–36).

This said, I wish to avoid the danger of endowing Voltaire's *Treatise* with a specious consistency that would disfigure it, as the modern editors of the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, faced with the massive task of its redaction, similarly warn in their assessment of the *Dictionnaire*'s scope and importance. It must, they say, be thought of as a multidimensional work susceptible to such configurations as each reader is capable of bringing to it (*OC*, 35, 124–26). Their warning, nevertheless, has the slight taste of postmodernist thinking and is not the end of the question. In his long intellectual cohabitation with, and contradictory responses to, the Jews, he called on his imagination again and again to test his fidelity to the demands of reason. Needless to say, he could not bring the two together in perfect harmony, but this should not be surprising. The impression we have, nonetheless, is that for Voltaire reason demanded passionate commitment, and that the imagination played a significant part in keeping both alive. Behind this notion is that the mind, through the imagination, might enhance the powers of reason. Such a construal cannot, however, ignore the excesses of imagination, as he knew from his observations of religion's descent into fanaticism. Indeed, these disastrous aspects of the imagination alerted him to its complexities as well as to its beneficent sides.[2]

That the imagination as a conceptual instrument can be called on to enhance the range of cognitive action, may be compared with the practical uses of the imagination analyzed by a number of thinkers. In Michael Oakeshott's view, for example, the self and non-self generate or create one another. The self is activity; the self knows itself from its activity in the world of other selves. Oakeshott calls this activity imagining; we know the non-self as a being composed of images, and we make them. They are not indefinite in appearance; they are always specific in character. What he calls

the "conversation of mankind" brings together different modes of imagining by means of which we make specific choices, registering our approval or disapproval:

> In other words, selves in moral activity are equal members of a community of selves: and approval and disapproval are activities which belong to them as members of this community. The moral skill in practical activity, the *ars bene beatique vivendi*, is knowing how to behave in relation to selves ingenuously recognized as such.[3]

Voltaire was part, it can be said, of such a specific community, what we might call an enlightened one, whose members knew each other in specific ways and engaged in similar activities, but, as such, it was not without some capacity to consider the placement of other selves as part of an enlarged collectivity.

Imagination has been treated as an inferior, in fact, a harmful intrusion of the body into the realm of mind, according to Martha Nussbaum. Borrowing Aristotle's contention that it is a mistake to split the cognitive and the emotive, she maintains that the "concrete responses of emotion and imagination" can aid moral choice, while too great a reliance on the intellect can veer us away from its course.[4] Thinking requires imagination; without it, thinking becomes arid. It is a way into the past; it can help create new ways of thought. Imagination can enlighten as well as lead human beings astray; it can widen human experience as well as narrow it. Hannah Arendt, following Kant, stresses only the positive effects of the imagination, and sees it as a vital faculty that forms the basis of the common sense needed to create a community made up, however, of only those who are ready to make their own judgments.[5] But she is more lavish in her praise:

> Imagination alone enables us to see things in their proper perspective, to put that which is too close at a certain distance so that we can see and understand it without bias and prejudice, to bridge abysses of remoteness until we can see and understand everything that is too far away from us as though it were our own affair. This 'distancing' of some things and bridging the abysses to others is part of the dialogue of our understanding.[6]

An analogy of sorts may be found in what the art historian, E. H. Gombrich affirms, when thinking of physical images, that they must not be overlooked in determining standards of truth. What he says can be extended to those other images we carry around in our heads:

> [T]he student of the evocative potential of images cannot do without it (imagination). … [H]e must account for the capacity of the human mind to respond not only to individual memories but to kinds or

> classes of events. Whatever we study, we are always likely to land ourselves right in the middle of the oldest and most persistent philosophical debate, the debate about the so-called problem of universals.[7]

It is by looking at Voltaire's quest for the essential that we may ask how we might distinguish or disentangle the notions of imagined others, the non-critical images of others, and reimagine them, that is, learning to see them afresh once we see that what we saw and thought we knew fail the tests of logic and experience. We may ask such a question in the instance of Voltaire who began his examination of the "Jewish Question" within an existing body of heterogeneous beliefs and approaches that made up a confused, often crude, and unstable paradigm that had already been subjected to much criticism before him, and that he was eager to destroy in the name of reason and civilization against the forces of barbarism and established religion.

## Spinoza and the Imagination

The question of the role of the imagination recalls two of the three kinds of cognition that Spinoza discussed in the *Ethics*. Spinoza contrasts human imagination, which is composed of inadequate ideas, and the properly intellectual faculties made up entirely of adequate ideas, which rested on reason (*Ethics*, 2, Proposition 40, Scholium 2, pp. 148–49). According to Yirmiyahu Yovel, for whom Spinoza's philosophy presented a radical concept of immanence—the idea that there is nothing beyond this-worldly existence and that God and nature are identical—Spinoza sought to establish a "religion of reason over and above ordinary rationality, one which expresses itself in science and in practical ethics." Rationality does double work: in its higher form, which necessarily rests on science and practical ethics, it leads to a "this-worldly form of salvation, in which eternity penetrates temporal life, finitude is redeemed, the passions are turned into free, positive emotions as … the individual realizes his or her unity with God (= the unified deified universe) through knowledge and intellectual love."[8] When Spinoza questioned whether reason was totally illuminating, he was looking at the practical side of ethics and distinguishing between the two forms of rationality:

> All men do, indeed, seek their advantage, but by no means from the dictates of sound reason. For the most part the objectives they seek and judge to be the most beneficial are determined only by fleshy desire, and they are carried away by their emotions, which take no account of the future or of other considerations.

He believed that other means might have to be chosen to expose and demolish irrational beliefs, including the imagination itself; the imagination

is not only useful but essential to well-being (*TTP*, Ch. 5, p. 116). To have, as he says, "reason always at hand," we need to think of the injuries people do to one another, so that when they themselves are injured they will be able to "join the image of the injury to the imagination." Then, the hatred we feel from our injuries "shall occupy a small part of the imagination." This requires "presence of mind and … fortitude" (*Ethics*, 5, Proposition 10, Scholium, p. 296).[9] When we combine Spinoza's reflections on the way in which the individual deals with the injuries he suffers from others, and his concern for the ways in which a discrete community suffers injuries, there is little doubt that he was thinking of the hatred shown Jews—the Marrano Jews whom he knew best. The crudest forms of the imagination can, it is clear from his knowledge of Jewish expulsions from Spain and Portugal, quickly come to the surface:

> If anyone has been affected with pleasure or pain by someone who belongs to a group or nation that is different from his own, and this is accompanied by the idea of that person, under the universal name of that group or nation, as its cause, then he will love or hate not only the person in question, but all the members of that group or nation.
>
> (*Ethics*, 3, Proposition 46, p. 199).

It seems that his separation of reason and imagination is not as categorical as it may appear, and he certainly attributed more to the power of the imagination than to the power of reason in the troubled world of human relations. Thus, he argues that, by their very nature, human beings are for the most part ruled by their imagination and, therefore, cannot have clear ideas and can only with difficulty achieve philosophic truth. In his remarks on the prophets, he writes that their gifts were clouded by the febrile nature of the imagination. He does not rule it out as wholly inimical to reason. Indeed, if, as he says, reflective thought must be called on as a corrective: "In order that we may attain certainty of what we imagine, there has to be something in addition to imagination, namely reasoning" (*TTP*, Ch. 2, p. 74), he does not simply posit an opposition between reason and imagination. For, he argues, "[s]o as long as the mind imagines those things which increase or help our body's power of acting, so long the body is affected in ways which increase or help its power of acting" (*Ethics*, 3, Proposition 12, p. 174).[10]

Spinoza's view of the practicality of reason stems from his identification of "affects (emotions) [with] (representational) ideas."[11] And what about human reasoning when it comes to rights and moral choice? As order and authority would collapse if each individual did what he desired, reason dictated that "the life of men without mutual assistance would be miserable," leading them "to do to no one what they would not want done to themselves, and to uphold another's right as they would their own." It was a social contract in which "the unrestricted right naturally possessed by each

individual should be put into common ownership, and that this right should no longer be determined by the strength and appetite of the individual, but by the power and will of all together." To achieve this goal, all would have to:

> bind themselves by the most stringent pledges to be guided in all matters only by the dictates of reason (which nobody ventures openly to oppose, lest he should appear to be without capacity to reason) and to keep appetite in check in so far as it tends to another's hurt . . .
>
> (Quotations from *TTP*, Ch. 16, p. 239).

Don Garrett points out that Spinoza contends that many desires are produced by the imagination, but that adequate ideas can also produce desire. "Ethics merely shows," he adds, "in what that self-preservation consists and what are the most effective means to it."[12] It is within human society such as it is, warts and all, that the choice, I might add, is made. Imagination can make us grasp the well-being of our fellows, because human beings need one another, and they can ideally begin to perceive this through reason. The trouble is that there can never be a total harmony of human interests, based on a presumed equality of reason that will shape desires by an overarching reason. True, Spinoza had no absolute faith in the simple power of democracy and did not believe that reason was within the range of the ordinary citizen's capacity, but he was more of a democrat than either Bayle or Voltaire. On these questions, Voltaire seemed to follow Bayle who had a horror of sedition, factionalism, and popular ignorance, and insisted that not only must the absolute sovereign resist them with force if need be, but also maintain superior power against the noble and ecclesiastical classes who had a history of challenging monarchical authority.[13]

Spinoza's arguments favoring the rights of the sovereign make him sound occasionally like Hobbes, but a lighter version: he never thought of a state of nature as a perilous place from which human beings had to escape into the arms of a single, arbitrary sovereign. He was more inclined to say that, in a state of nature, human beings consult only their own interest and so can have no conception of wrongdoing, which comes to life only in a commonwealth where it is punished (*Ethics*, 3, Proposition 37, Scholium 2, pp. 253–55). Indeed, in the *Tractatus-Theologico-Politicus*, and especially in his unfinished work, *Tractatus Politicus*, he finds much fault with monarchical institutions that tend inevitably to magnify the power of the monarch, and he shows that he remained, on balance, a democratic republican, even if he allowed that it was possible for a people to live reasonably under a king: "[A] people can preserve a considerable measure of freedom under a king as long as they ensure the king's power is regulated by the people's power and safeguarded by the people's armed might."[14] We should remember that Spinoza's underlying

premise is the proposition that human imagination—the condition of the multitude—and reason—the gift of a few—might together create the kind of political power that enhances human freedom and maintains order in which freedom is safeguarded, and reduces human misery.[15] We will return to this question later in this chapter.

## Images of Jews

As a way of piercing the complexities of the imagination, I suggest that imagining others and reimagining them exist on a continuum along which there is movement from one's first or original perception of others—the impressions of others founded on little or no information—information that falls far below the realities of experience, based on the rumors and stereotypes that make up the vagaries and misconceptions we have of others, in short, the sediment of unexamined beliefs that do not pass the tests of reason. Even so, the imagined world, in which others are placed or pigeonholed, cannot be said to be wholly removed from some kinds of experience, those arising from, for example, unacknowledged fears and resentments, reinforced by the impressions of others and appropriated through time without any process of verification, let alone knowledge. In the France of the *ancien régime*, the tiny numbers of Jews, who lived in a great Christian sea, were rarely seen in the flesh but were nevertheless imagined. The boundaries between the imagined and the reimagined are not impermeable; they are not incisively separate categories.[16] The first set of images may well survive and invade the second. To that extent, they are neighbors. At least, the first set may be regarded as an intrusive force before it can be supplanted or displaced, and, as well, the language by means of which it is culturally absorbed, may guarantee its long life so that it may persist in some elusive form in the reconfigured second image. Thus, the effort to break away from it may not work.[17]

These intersecting theoretical vectors can add weight to our goal of understanding Voltaire's historical sense. The first thing that must be said is that, like any individual who imagines the other, he had first to acquire or work out, however imperfectly, a self-image, that is, a self that starts from a mental space, almost always a confused and mutilated state, as Spinoza terms it. Voltaire's ideal self-image he identified with the triumph of reason over religious prejudice, an intellectual place that he believed was foundational to his thought. This suggests a strong affinity with Spinoza's ideas. With that as his starting point, he approached the Jews as a people living almost wholly in the past. The self-images and the images that non-Jews and Jews have of one another are difficult but useful constructions, and are an improvement over the inevitable futility of trying to measure national and ethnic differences. In these images is embedded the idea of the other, the figure of the Jew seen and represented as an alien who is not a fully accepted or integrated part of a self-contained and non-self-questioning

cultural and national tradition. There are objective realities, however, as well as images. In addition, too stark a picture of strict Jewish observance would defy belief. Image and reality should not be confused, as the first was more often than not an exaggeration of the second. Jews, in the doubly closed society of the early modern period, their own and their hosts', tended to think of themselves ideally and unwaveringly as the chosen people, therefore different and determined to close themselves off from the host society and ensure their future as an endogamous community. Many spoke more than one language, which reinforced their strangeness in the eyes of non-Jews. Their rituals strengthened notions of purity and fears of pollution by non-Jews, either through marriage or by breaking dietary laws. They saw themselves not only as the chosen people, but they also chose to preserve their difference. They did so by strict adherence, not only to the Five Books of Moses (the Torah), but also to the teachings of the Talmud, the chief corpus of rabbinical interpretation, that governed their attitudes to the rhythms, practices, and necessities of daily life, and deemed departure from them an affront to the Law and to the metaphysical meanings of Judaism. They clung to these to maintain their separateness and cohesion, and they guarded both to perpetuate their difference. This "legalism" was precisely what Voltaire found abhorrent. Their cohesion was also inseparable from their commercial activities, which were an alien, suspiciously cosmopolitan, but economically necessary, element in agrarian societies. As Jacob Katz notes, "It was a typical feature of Jewish economic activity that it could rely on business connections with Jewish communities in even far-flung cities and countries. . . . [But] Jews who made a living", he adds, "by sitting in their shops waiting for clients were the minority rather than the prevalent type."[18]

If Jews saw themselves in this way, the people of the host societies in which they lived saw them similarly, if not identically, as foreign and strange, and also, as dangerous and capable of injuring them through physical proximity and, perhaps, as well, through a species of spiritual contamination. Besides they were resentful of the Jewish idea of chosenness. There was, however, no absolute symmetry in the perceptions each had of the other's powers. The advantage was always with the host societies. They set the rules. Endogamy was, it must be remembered, to be found on both sides of the divide, but it was not impermeable. The universalism of Christianity set the barriers lower, and Jews were accepted, if the dominant culture so-willed, though always grudgingly and never completely, once they gave up their particularism, once, in short, they surrendered what they regarded as their essence and their own aspirations towards universalism, best expressed through their prophets. Jews got through to the other side, almost always by apostasy. This was the most radical form of acceptance. For centuries, Jews and non-Jews in Christian societies lived side by side largely in a condition of mutual mistrust. Acceptance was not only hedged round with suspicions; it could be, as well, capricious, subject to clerical

fanaticism (the Crusades), and early forms of state expansion (as in Spain), the goals of which could not be achieved without killing or expelling the Jewish population, and confiscating their wealth on the grounds, so the reasoning went, that it had been obtained dishonestly and unlawfully. Jews could not be confined everywhere by the constraints and limits of an agrarian society that was in important respects held together by commerce in primary goods, serving wider markets as well as local and regional ones. Jews lived within it but outside it as well. So while they lived in their own closely knit communities, their endogamy was paradoxically the condition of their presence in national, trans-European and trans-Atlantic trade. Endogamy united disparate Jewish communities across a world dependent on commerce. At the same time, the international scale of commerce exposed Jews to a wider world in which the ambivalence of being Jewish was heightened. Isaac de Pinto, the Dutch Jewish economist, picked up on what he called the chameleon-like character of the Jews, "who everywhere [take] the colors of the different climates that [they] inhabit, the different people [they] frequent, and the different forms of government under which [they] live."[19]

At the same time, Jews adhered to their past and traditions. Even if the most educated and affluent departed from rigorous observance, few were receptive to the idea of giving up their lives as Jews. Without acknowledging these changes in Jewish life, Voltaire coupled his hostility to the Jews as the carriers of a stultifying and retrograde religion that Christianity incorporated as its own, with his contempt for their traditional commercial role as usurers. What is curious is that he did not appear to appreciate how the conditions for modernity—economic expansion and its softening of *moeurs*—might include Jews who, as outsiders, were not insignificant players in these developments. As we shall see later, while Voltaire embraced *la douce commerce*, he failed to see how Jews fitted into the expanding world of wealth that outstripped their more restricted and narrower practices in usury.

So the observed and the observer, each imagining the other and then reimagining the other, stared, so to speak, at one another on either side of a divide, rejecting in part or in whole what they regarded as offensive to their notions of humankind, while glimpsing indistinctly the features of a common humanity. We are concerned, then, with the problem of how, on either side of the divide, people viewed one another. In the reimagined world, which I shall define as stretching out to grasp and to take in others, there may be a movement away from the previously imagined world that acts as a barrier to such a reaching out. The reimagined world constitutes a kind of transformation. But it is not entirely divorced, as I suggested earlier, from how it was imagined in the first place. In the case of charges of usurious practices among Jews, the imagined elements were conflated with the real, or perhaps they were not entirely dismissed, even when a sympathetic assessment was made of such practices, stressing reasons for them, including historical conditions, and so forth. To cite other examples, we may cast our eyes on the persistence of beliefs that Jews formed a conspiratorial group invisibly

linked together, determining the destiny of the world. Even if the imagining of others is more successful, the effort to enter that world in which a mental negotiation between resemblances and differences may take place requires hard mental labor. Knowing others depended on a desire to know, mixed with sympathy, and perhaps with empathy as well, but above all sharing a language of accommodation that does not obscure real differences while doing one's best to vanquish artificial ones. Differences were valued as identity markers; they were, contrariwise, regarded with suspicion and hostility as an infringement of the principle of equality that radically challenged existing ethnic or national identities.

Let us remember two very important facts. First, that the Enlightenment, to use Ernest Gellner's words "deployed reasoning . . . on behalf of a symmetrical, human, and humane revelation allegedly inherent in human reason or nature as such, rather than in some privileged Information Point with its direct line to the transcendent."[20] The action Gellner describes helps to clarify Voltaire's specific position. For him, reason, presumably available to all human beings, overrode, on almost every count, genuflection to all kinds of metaphysical musings about human nature and human destiny, especially those based on notions of divine revelation. Reason was Voltaire's dissolver of traditional loyalties to place, ritual, custom, and so on. However, in the case of the Jews, even more than in the case of the masses, he seems to say that such loyalties would long have the power to resist reason and change. This brings into glaring relief the claim that, on the one hand, all of humankind would fall under the power of reason once misbegotten beliefs and superstitions were eradicated, but that the transformation would be the unique work of the *philosophes* (*OC,* 43, Voltaire to d'Alembert, February, 13 1764, D11694, 126–28), and, on the other hand, that the common people, guided by "unchained reason" would reject the Christian fables as a perversion of natural religion and enter a period of virtue and justice ("Le Sermon des Cinquante," *OCM*, 24, 453). He put this hope in much the same way in his distinction between beneficial prejudices, for example, when children are instructed in elementary rules of morality in order to learn the differences between virtue and vice, but this can be harmful when appearances deceive, making it difficult to peer beneath a person's outward show, and elicit by default one's unmerited respect. As one matures, you discover that:

> this man is a charlatan, filled with pride, interest, and tricks; on looking at the matter again, you come to despise what you have seen previously, and prejudice gives way to judgment. It was through prejudice that you believed the fables upon which you were reared as a child.
>
> ("Préjugés," *OC*, 36, 456).[21]

The question I am posing takes account of the fact that, in order to be true to any narrative of how people in the eighteenth century dealt with these

problems, we must acknowledge that we too live to a lesser or greater degree in an imagined world in which we are all, to a certain extent, others; a world that has been made by ourselves and others, both those who lived in the past and those who are very much part of the present. In his early study of imagined communities, Benedict Anderson confines himself to the definition of a nation by contrasting it with smaller groups. The nation is, in his view, truly imagined because its members cannot know most of their fellow-members and must necessarily imagine them as part of it, while members of smaller groups need not rely on mental images.[22] This distinction has its merits, but it does not tell us how the members of the larger group, which in time came to constitute a nation, imagine the lives of members of the smaller groups. The nation substituted secular forms of religious feelings, played on feelings of immortality, continuity, and past suffering, all of which were common features of small groups, such as the Jews—the very community that Voltaire believed could not find a foothold in the modern world.

To move from the imagined to the reimagined means at some level a confrontation between the world we imagine as our own, the imagined world of those whose minds we try to recapture from the past, and the imagined world of our own contemporaries. In other words, we size up situations, jettisoning, as much as possible, unreliable and unverifiable accounts of the past, to give impetus to our efforts to achieve a description or analysis that will not lend credence to past or present prejudices that get in the way of knowing people, whether in the past or present, moving beyond them to achieve fairness, through the creation of a symmetry of relations between people not in the first instance known to each other—Rawls's extension of the Enlightenment ideal political community.[23] By borrowing this notion of a symmetry, we may see more clearly, first in Spinoza's case, followed by Voltaire in the second place, that their trust in reason would tip the balance in favor of the positive, as opposed to the negative, influence of the imagination. Voltaire's campaign to extend the rule of reason was predicated on the capacity of human beings to make this rational leap to educate themselves and others to realize the benefits that would accrue to all. Rationality, the Enlightenment's ideal, would conquer the world.

This brings us once again to Spinoza's guarded support of a democratic social contract. It had as its object guarantees for a notion of liberty that would ensure a society of self-determining individuals who would follow the laws of reason which, he concluded, could only be vouchsafed if the sovereign exercised "full control and [is] not . . . forced to surrender to agitators," but to be successful, the sovereign must "grant freedom of judgment and to govern men in such a way that the different and conflicting views they openly proclaim do not prevent them from living together in peace" (*TTP*, Ch. 20, p. 297). Great intellectual energy, however, was the condition of such freedom. That Spinoza was unable to reconcile freedom and dependence on

external causal forces did not prevent him from believing that human beings were free in their everyday lives from external constraint.[24] Voltaire, also searching for solutions, did not look to Spinoza's ideas on how to end social alienation, not only between rulers and ruled—the "multitude," to use Spinoza's term—and between properly constituted authority and its right to obedience, but also between its included and excluded members, to create the conditions of an expanded sociability, conditions which would build on what human beings naturally do, that is, when they "imagine someone who is like [them] to be affected with the same emotion." (*Ethics*, 3, Proposition 27, p. 184). But, as human beings are not alike, because their passions differ, it will require an authority with power—the state—to define good and evil, but such a goal cannot be achieved without the kind of communication that would respect freedom.[25]

Also problematic was the degree to which traditional beliefs could be reconciled with the new demands of an increasingly secular state, as well as Spinoza's imagined one. In both instances, he found room for a "true religion," a faith, which "demands piety rather than truth," and does not require such notions of free will, God's omnipresence, and so on (*TTP*, Ch. 14, p. 225). He dismissed the idea that human beings stand outside, and are not determined by nature. It is foolish to think "of man in Nature as being like an empire within an empire" (*Ethics*, 4, Preface, p. 163). A true religion may ensure morality, which is its chief merit (*TTP*, Ch. 11, pp. 201–2). But neither does faith have anything to do with science and philosophy, which have their own foundations of inquiry. After his excommunication, he devoted his intellectual labors to science—he corresponded with Henry Oldenburg, the secretary of the Royal Society in London—and associated with the Collegiants, who, because of their liberal religious and political views, were shunned by the Calvinists. He did not, however, seek conversion. Though he failed to deal with the fate of Jews in a society that was beginning to lose its religious moorings, he implied that they would not be excluded from all the rights of citizenship because of their strict adherence to ritual and obedience to Mosaic law.

An enlightened but monarchical state, for Voltaire, was what reason dictated in a continent governed by quasi-absolutist rulers. In such a state, nations, like those of the Jews (they were so designated in *ancien régime* France), constituted communities that were retrograde and irrational, sunk in tradition and the past, and constitutionally unable to rise to reasonableness. They would have to be brought into the modern age, but it would not be an age of popular government, for he was not optimistic about the human capacity for self-government, and even less sanguine, as he said on nearly every occasion, about the capacity of Jews, hobbled by their unquestioning submission to discredited doctrines, to emerge from their willful ignorance ("Etats, Gouvernements," *OC*, 36, 74). In his mind, there was an inverse relationship between religious fanaticism and an ability to exercise either individual self-control and collective self-governance. In his

discussion of the early Christian sects, once they achieved recognition in the fourth century, he says, the spirit of vengeance, which, as pious Christians, they should have forsaken, was given full sway as they resorted to the slaughter of their erstwhile persecutors. And so it continued, except in China whose emperor asked the Christian missionaries to leave his kingdom ("Histoire du Christianisme," *OC*, 36, 545–88, esp. 581–82, 588).

The controversies surrounding assimilation have not been extinguished, but it could not, in practical terms, have any other meaning but conversion for Jews before the eighteenth century, and for long afterwards. Secularization has, of course, changed the parameters of the exchange. Nevertheless, Jews and the "Jewish Question" remain the subject of multiple discourses, and, of course, both are related to changing historic conditions that color specific instances. Just as it is historically valid to argue, as Voltaire does, that Jews should not be treated as existing outside history, yet contradictorily treats them in just such a manner, so it is mistaken to claim that anti-Semitism has forever been the same. History will also determine the nature of Jewish survival. The traditional images of the Jews have a long and troubled history, but they took on a new immediacy and made their presence felt and known in the modern world when Europe's scholars, philosophers, bureaucrats, aristocrats, and members of the professions formed what may be called an enlightened community. It was a community that thrived on and was founded on a far-reaching print culture, or, as Benedict Anderson terms it, "print capitalism," which it used to spread its message, even as it set itself apart from society's non-elites, millions of whom lived in an oral culture.[26] Many had access to well-stocked libraries, were subscribers to learned journals and reviews, were contributors to and readers of a growing number of encyclopedias, lexicons and dictionaries, and were to be found mainly in the great cities of the north-west and in important centers in Italy. It was in the name of "'philosophy,' or what we would today call philosophy, science and technology," that the world was radically changed.[27] These men, and, in some instances, women, sought to demonstrate the flaws, errors, and pieties of received beliefs that were shielded by a nearly impregnable system of ecclesiastical doctrine bearing the marks of authority, both in its rules and processes of dispute, while enjoying the state's coercive powers to enforce it. In these endeavors, Voltaire imagined himself as one of the greatest breakers of the images of a benighted age. His attempt to come to terms with another alarming image, as if it epitomized many of the ills of the past that were still present—the image of the Jew as a perplexing, feared, and often despised, as well as a pathetic, absurd, and comic figure, who might be rescued from his alienated existence that bred deceit, trickery, unjustified arrogance, and self-regard—was rooted in a key Enlightenment belief: that life's most perplexing problems could be faced and largely solved by radically reducing or altogether eliminating traditional religious belief as a source of knowledge, truth, and a guide to practical action.

The signs of a modern world in which these goals would be reached were, for him, as certain as they could be, as he affirmed in his conclusion to *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*—the hundred or so years that had elapsed since Louis XIV's accession. "I have called this century," he wrote:

> the century of Louis XIV not only because this monarch protected the arts more than all his contemporary monarchs put together. . . . I fixed this epoch as starting some years before Louis XIV and some years after him. Indeed it was during this time that the human mind made the greatest progress.
>
> (*OCM*, 14, 559)[28]

As well, it was during this momentous century that, as he put it at the conclusion of his history of the Sun King, "the knowledge of nature" had increased, "the doubt raised about the fables that had been honored by giving them the name of history" had been encouraged, and "a sound metaphysics that had been freed from scholastic presumptions" had been cultivated, while the reach of reason was being extended (*OCM*, 15, 432).[29] Fables, he said elsewhere, are mostly corruptions of ancient histories or the work of an overheated imagination ("Fables," *OC*, 36, 102).[30] For these momentous changes, humanity owed a debt to the minds of a small band of outstanding geniuses, often persecuted, but who, despite all hardships, offered solace to a world torn by war. Men had become more enlightened in the past century from one end of Europe to the other than in all preceding ages (*OCM*, 14, 564). Indeed, taking a longer view, the changes over the last thousand years were even greater: civilization had advanced in Europe; it was wealthier, more populous, more enlightened. The morality inspiring peace was gaining the upper hand over religious dogma, which remained the single source of fanaticism, murder, and war (*OCM*, 13, 182–83). He was thinking, Keith Baker declares, no less of a revolution in the human mind, more important than, and the very underpinning of, all the revolutions occurring in states and governments.[31] He was, as I suggested earlier, both less radical and more guarded in his optimism. The signs were, he confessed—admitting to a measure of doubt—not all that clear. How much longer, he asked wearily, would Frenchmen have to wait to end the age of obscurantism and irrationality?

> It took us sixty years to accept the demonstrations of Newton; we have barely started to have the courage to save the lives of our children through inoculation; only very recently have we begun to adopt correct agricultural principles; when shall we adopt equally correct principles of humanity? And on what grounds may we loftily reproach the pagans for having created martyrs, when we have been guilty of similar cruelties in similar circumstances?
>
> (*TT*, p. 47)

It is within this heady atmosphere of generalized hopes, impatience, and doubt that we must see Voltaire's world of Jews. The print culture of the enlightened community may be said to be the antithesis of the laws written in the Torah from which the Jewish community took its lessons. It was ancient. Not so was the *voicing* of the text that resulted in an oral tradition, which doubled for the written one, as Jean-François Lyotard puts it.[32] For Voltaire, as we saw, the oral traditions in all cultures came first; the written came later and supplanted them. Alongside these two traditions in Judaism, another, the world of print that included books coming out of sixteenth century Jewish printing houses, in what has been called Old Yiddish, came into play. Mendelssohn, as we will see in a later chapter, was equivocal about the addition. He paid scant attention to these earliest manifestations of Jewish print culture, registering the advent of Jewish print as the inevitable and unique work of the Enlightenment. In his time, Yiddish was to become the object of scorn by the leading figures of the Jewish Enlightenment, in Germany above all. Elsewhere, Jews, like Isaac de Pinto, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, were publishing works in French, and, on the eve of the Revolution, the Jews who participated in the debate on their future had become part of mainstream literate culture.

The debate among historians on what Voltaire construed were the realities of the ancient Hebrew past, as narrated in the Old Testament, instead of what he called the fictions surrounding it, and, as well, of the role of Jews in the modern world, has largely centered on the question of whether his hostility to them should be considered, as Arthur Hertzberg has asserted, a manifestation of mostly straightforward, anti-Jewish sentiments, or might rather be treated more generously, as Peter Gay does, on the grounds that his real target was the revealed truths of the Universal Church, which found the basis of its doctrines in the Old Testament.[33] If we accept the first view, Voltaire, the iconoclast, emerges, somewhat paradoxically, as an anti-Semite of the Enlightenment or, if that characterization is too harsh, as a critic of what might loosely be called the Jewish religion as he understood it. We would, needless to say, be flirting dangerously with hyperbole if we descended the slippery slope from anti-Jewish sentiment in the eighteenth century to the racial anti-Semitism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But the distinction between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism may in fact be over subtle. A general notion of Voltaire's anti-Jewish sentiments, removed from their historic context, lacks critical rigor; while failure to take account of Voltaire's understanding of history, in which he embeds the ancient Hebrew past and deals with the Jews in post-biblical times, however marginal his treatment of the latter, compounds the problem of how to evaluate his ideas. Only if these pitfalls are avoided can there be movement away from the sterility of an either/or approach. In addition, Voltaire's critique of the Jews and his descriptions of the persecutions and the discriminations they suffered, whatever construal we may place upon his expectations about them, is not to be confused with the benign forms of discrimination that a

liberal civil society accepts and tolerates in the private sphere so long as it does not impinge on the public social sphere, though the sharp distinctions between discriminations often lose their edge in practice.

His anti-Jewish views should be seen as an integral part of his philosophy of history that he intended as a critical analysis of past cultures and religions, the Jewish one not excepted. Voltaire hoped that the "Jewish Question" would vanish, and that the animus which it engendered, not excepting his own, would disappear along with it. We shall see where that hope led him, a hope that cannot be separated from his belief in human progress.[34] Even so, his *mélange* of denunciations of the Old Testament, and of Jewish beliefs and practices in post-biblical times, makes it difficult to spare him from the accusation of harboring startling anti-Jewish views that amount at the very least to an early modern form of anti-Semitism. His justifiably skeptical critique of the myths that had been passed off as biblical truths occupied a contiguous, but important space, in his article on Abraham—the very second entry in the *Dictionnaire philosophique*—alongside an outrageous piece of anti-Jewish invective, in which he said that Jews were as adept in turning fables into history as they were in turning secondhand clothes into new ones ("Abraham," *OC*, 35, 95). Even to the modern ear, the offensiveness is hard to bear; and that is why the anti-Jewish prejudice of one era and the anti-Semitism of another are hard to keep separate.

If we give weight to Peter Gay's argument, even with some reservations, we will still be bound to ask whether, by instrumentalizing the Jews of the Old Testament, Voltaire dangerously, even if on a few occasions, it seems, somewhat unintentionally, shifted the focus from the Church back to them. It is also extraordinary that the controversy has all but ignored the open hatred of the Jews in the gospels to which Voltaire, as a student, was surely exposed as a normal part of the curriculum at the Jesuit school of Louis-Le-Grand. To insist that his anti-clericalism rested principally on his aversion for Judaism because it formed the basis for Christian dogma, is to conflate two very different religions and create a kind of spurious connection between Judaism and Christianity, even if, in Jacques-Benigne Bossuet's apologetics, it seemed somehow historic to clothe and sanction the Jewish Bible with the dignity attached to an ancient sacred text, while at the same time demanding that it yield to a superior sacred one. There was nothing sacred in either, Voltaire insisted. They were derived from the same mythical root. It may make more sense to suggest that his hatred of organized Christianity was nurtured quite early on and predated his later reconstruction of ancient Jewish history. This reminder would add weight to Hertzberg's argument.[35] It is likely, nonetheless, that, by accepting one or the other explanations unreservedly, we will run a considerable risk of bypassing the need to see his thoughts on the Jews, both those that were unfavorable and those that were less insensitive, within a larger frame of the general history to which he dedicated a significant part of his intellectual life. We should also remember that his assessment of Louis XIV's reign did

not pass over what he considered the loss of a great opportunity to throw off the shackles of Rome, as well as a misspent chance to resolutely affirm the principles of Gallicanism, opening the way to the creation of a civil society welcoming and encouraging more channels for economic development, and the dissemination of the principles of polite culture. A tolerant society, founded on nurturing, and subjecting everything to the test of, reason, was thus, in Voltaire's view, delayed.

That the apologists of the Church, hugging to their bosoms the badges of authoritative interpretation of Scripture, were bearing the weight of heavy criticism, was a point of departure for many thinkers in Europe who sought to keep theologic doctrine in its place, but Voltaire's attacks were of a vehemence rarely, if ever, matched in intellectual circles in other parts of the West. What is strange is that his attacks on the Church did not dwell on its responsibility for preaching and fomenting anti-Jewish hatred by perpetuating images of Jewish perversity and unspeakable crimes. Such origins counted for less in Voltaire's world than his harsh condemnation of the malevolent power of the Church in its role as a barrier to the sources of knowledge to be found in the very springs of human thought rather than in the dark recesses of unexamined belief. The Church's dark history of persecution was not passed over, but, by comparison, it was treated less critically.[36]

Within the frame that he devised, he ascribed particular features to Jews as a specific human group, (particularism), yet at the same time he tended to—but he did so hesitantly—see all of humankind as sharing a common, or universal nature, the essence that differentiated humans from other species. But he also discerned another kind of essentialism, not only the differences among specific human groups that distinguished them from one another. He also sought to establish for each of them an intrinsic uniqueness. In such a configuration, the particular was defined by the essential. He did not, however, suggest or work out an explanation of how the two were related. Jewish specificity, as he saw it, differed from other forms, say, the specificity of the Chinese or Laplanders. It was a common conceit among Europeans that human beings could only be understood and, hence, managed, if they were viewed as belonging to separate categories. Such a taxonomy ordered and differentiated humanity, but at the same time made it possible to conceive of it hierarchically, on a scale from the primitive to the more advanced, according to the stadial theory of progress, a theory that, we should add, did not affect Voltaire's less elaborated anthropology.[37] Significant was the difficulty in extricating the individual from the group. If the group is unique, is that uniqueness stamped on every individual in it? Is everyone trapped in it, or can everyone be part of it and at the same time express his uniqueness as a self?

Jews, as we have observed, for the most part identified and accepted their selves within their communal boundaries, and preferably defined them according to tradition, rather than according to the categories established by the laws and customs of the host societies in which they lived. It did not strike

Voltaire as a noteworthy fact that the notion of specific human groups bearing unchangeable characteristics might invite the observation that such images, even if fixed in the mind of the observer, may well be illusory; that they may be constructs founded on fear and wishful thinking, rather than some unalterable, scientifically established facts. Some Jews, who, more and more during the mature period of the Enlightenment, sought and found ways to escape ghetto life to which most remained confined, were moved to act by its restrictions imposed from within and outside it. They seized such opportunities as were available and gave thought to the possibilities of opening up a wider world in which they too might live without civil and political disabilities. They did not concede that their distinctiveness, which they identified with their religious beliefs and their particular culture and customs, constituted proof of such undesirable innate qualities as to cut them off from general society and fatally exclude them from adopting and participating in the values that bound them, like others, to a common human purpose. They searched for those entries into a wider society that would recognize them as individuals as well as members of a group. Voltaire's range of vision proved to be too narrow to take in the dual nature of Jewish aspirations. The problem was confounded by his failure to distinguish between biblical Jews and the Jews of his own time. Hence, the boundaries between the particular and the essential began to shift and were often hard to maintain.

Voltaire, as we shall later see in greater detail, posited an essential human nature, but then, when he believed that he had found exceptions in the human species, he concluded that they somehow had not yet met the criteria of full humanity. To these particular exceptions, he assigned another kind of essentialism, an essence that could be said to explain their particularity, but he was, contradictorily, as we shall see when he applied himself to the tasks of philosophic anthropology, far from accepting the notion that essence is prior and spiritually superior to specific collective identities. His brand of essentialism that he usually couched in terms of inferiority or exoticism, placed some non-Europeans apart from Europeans. Many primitive peoples met these criteria. They were of interest to him as living contrasts between the civilized, partially civilized, and non-civilized portions of the planet. Voltaire did not, however, fit Jews into these crude categories—human and almost human. He settled on what he deemed to be their exceptionalism, but in a negative sense. Jews were the prime example of a negative kind of essentialism that explained their particularity. In fact, as far as Jews were concerned, he proceeded to eliminate the distinction between their essence and their appearance; indeed, there was not any for those who could truly see, but further demonstrations were needed to prove that what they claimed to be was not the way they really were. The equivalence between their essence, appearance, and image had to be once and for all corrected; there had to be a fixed point, a point of order that placed Jews within a social structure that would not tolerate differences challenging orderly organized society. He was not able to decide whether it was their

religion or their culture or their history that was the more determining, or whether each could be separated from the others. While, to be sure, these were questions he took up in his discussion of other religions and cultures, and while he often compared the ancient Hebrews with other ancient peoples from whom the former, he said, borrowed many of their rituals and practices, his anti-Jewish animus was openly displayed on the grounds that they claimed virtues the others did not possess.

However, he need not be faulted entirely for making some of these highly tendentious observations. Clarity on the distinction he made between Europeans and non-Europeans, especially between technologically advanced and technologically backward peoples, drifted between ill-defined notions of culture, religion, and whatever light current scientific theories shed on both. Sheer speculation and naïve empirical guesswork were often the result. Within these constraints he saw and deplored a people that attributed to themselves a false, not a genuine, universalism, both in their vision of God and history—beliefs that needed correction by plunging them into the icy waters of history, making them part of what he deemed an authentic and true general account of the past that would destroy their self-proclaimed uniqueness. He was so intent on insisting that there was nothing unique about the Jewish religious past that he subsumed it under a kind of general perspective, erasing its particular features by likening it to and, indeed deriving it from, a host of other, primitive religious beliefs and practices. So, without being fully aware of the contradiction, he isolated particular features of the Jewish people, on the one hand, highlighting those he disliked, while denying, on the other, not only the originality, but also the significance of the emergence, of ethical monotheism. This transformation of Semitic polytheism eluded Voltaire, perhaps because he could not fathom why any people would give up the comforts of having several Gods and entrust themselves to one demanding God. The Hebrew God was, as Jack Miles writes:

> a fusion … not of all prior gods, only of several. The inner contradictions that were the result of the fusion took shape quite early on, as a finite set of inner contradictions. It was the biblical writers' common intellectual grasp of this set of contradictions—this set and no other—that permitted them, working over centuries, to contribute to the drawing of a single character.[38]

Voltaire's comments on Jewish circumcision, in which he similarly showed no sense of grasping how a primitive ritual could be symbolized as a covenant with God, are a characteristic example of his hostility to religion in its traditional forms ("Circoncision," *OC*, 35, 600–13).

What Jews feared, however, was an abstraction, such as universalism, that removed them from human history, and, by excluding them from it, threatened their particular existence. Voltaire, as others, including the physiocrats, Turgot, Quesnay, and Dupont de Nemours, and, to a lesser extent, the

*philosophes*, Diderot, Mably, and Rousseau, stood on behalf of the primacy of universal principles against family, and corporate and municipal values, which he saw as barriers to bringing greater uniformity and standardization to the legal system. Montesquieu, of an older generation, had not been so ready. He favored caution to avoid the erasure of legitimate differences, that is, to consider "which cases require uniformity and which require differences. . . . If citizens obey the laws, what difference does it make if they obey the same law." Uniformity, he said, is an idea that "sometimes grips great minds but infallibly assails small ones."[39]

## Human improvement and the limitations of reason

The prevailing interpretations of where to place Voltaire, as avatar of a universalism hostile to outworn differences, depleted of any utility they might once have had, in particular, the remnants of Judaism, or as an out-and-out anti-Semite, also do not give sufficient importance to his doubts about the power of reason to lighten the burdens of humanity, his sense of caution, resignation, and despair about a better future, his own feelings of living as an exile alienated from mainstream society, even if he was welcomed by sovereign heads of state (but not his own). There is more to be taken into account. Despite his membership and renown in the Republic of Letters and in the European academies, there is his regret that his eminence could not lift him above the margins of power. Voltaire turned his energy during the last twenty-five years of his life in exile to social improvements on his estate at Ferney and to instances of the miscarriage of justice.[40] Voltaire threw himself into this work to hold despair at bay, repressing his inner conflicts over the efficacy of reason. They should indeed not be overlooked. It may well transpire that they were to be left unresolved, but in that case it is better to acknowledge them as real rather than trying to prove that they were only of minor significance, better set aside in order to make Voltaire a consistent thinker and figure. Such an acknowledgment has the advantage of presenting a varied and faceted, instead of a stereoscopical, set of standard and conventional images that lack sufficient depth to explain a complex thinker. How far these internal conflicts, mental shifts, and ambiguities formed the creative elements of his self-image as an impartial critic, charting the follies of the past and holding on tightly to reason, lest it fall from his grasp, as a way of mitigating those yet to come; and whether he kept these questions at a distance, remain to be considered, as is the problem of whether he was able to transform those conflicts, perhaps also his doubts about doubt, into a fruitful discussion that advanced his understanding of the "Jewish Question" and met the broadest Enlightenment principles.

To some extent, Enlightenment thinkers shared a wish to progress to a time free of division, to a time of universal harmony, to an uncomplicated time—or knowing that this might be a dream—to seek out the means to

establish a new universal faith, and, as in the case of Voltaire, to the unity that reason could alone create, a reason that would see that all differences or, at the least, religious differences, would cease to create civil dissension, as equal sanctions would be applied to all if any one of them threatened to disturb the order of good government. Embedded in his call to reason was a dialectic between nature that obeyed universal principles, and human culture, displaying dissimilarities in custom and usage. Such differences could not, Voltaire argued, conceal the fact that, in all cultures, arbitrary power is held in check by law, custom, and morality. Above all, there exists a love of order that secretly animates humankind (*OCM*, 13, 180–82). Voltaire falls into the group of Enlightenment thinkers who espoused reason rather than tradition, the natural rather than the supernatural, as the foundation of a reasonable civil society in which human beings, answering only to rational argument and rejecting the miraculous, might practice tolerance and cultivate liberty. If, as historian, he did not make it his aim to elaborate a full theoretical structure for the study of history or failed to show such an intellectual bent, he did place a fair amount of trust in humanity's growing capacity to wrest from nature its secrets and its material benefits, which might have formed the basis for a comprehensive view of the past. He did not relate the call to bring reason into the lists against myth and superstition, to the idea that reason was immanent in history, as Kant and Hegel were to do. And, at the same time, while he linked progress to the spread of reason, he did not take up, as Turgot did, the problem of how a comparative method and a stadial theory of historic change could transform the guesswork that he relied on to explain human differences and historic change into a full articulation of a concept of progress. Thus, reason would be alone to carry the ball, despite the chances that it might be dropped. Neither reason nor progress, of course, was subject to absolute confirmation by facts. Still, there were ways, Voltaire believed, to measure change over time, how human life was getting better, and what human beings could do to make it better. His most spirited defense of reason was in his appeal to it in the cause of practical justice, even while he says nothing about how reason would achieve the liberating power to penetrate human consciousness. Thus, we find in the *Treatise on Tolerance* such eloquent, if rhetorical, sentiments as:

> Reason is gentle, humane, tolerant; she smothers discord, strengthens goodness, and renders obedience to the law so attractive that coercion is no longer necessary to uphold it. And we should not lightly dismiss the derision with which all educated persons nowadays view the subject of religious enthusiasm. Such derision is a powerful barrier to inhibit the bigots from going too far. . . . [T]his age of disgust with the past, this age of satiety, and the triumph of Reason, this will be the era of public harmony.
>
> (*TT*, pp. 25, 27)

Voltaire had in mind the Convulsionaries in Paris in the early eighteenth century, who, in their fury against the papal condemnation of Jansenism, tortured themselves in public as a preparation for the utterance of prophecies. Human beings are, nevertheless, subject to change. They are weak, fall into error, and are inconsistent, good reason to convince us that we need one another, he also wrote in the *Dictionnaire philosophique* ("Tolérance," *OC*, 36, 566).

He also tended to project what Amartya Sen calls the "cultural disharmonies and cultural boundaries" of his own time backwards in time to the Jews of the Old Testament,[41] and saw them only as marking the original point of social and religious turmoil. He managed this bit of intellectual *legerdemain* by avoiding a question that, in his dress as a historian, he might have asked, not occasionally as he did (for example, *TT*, p. 59), but as part of his larger scheme: how Jews living eons of time apart remained the same, even as in his plotting of the rise and fall of past cultures he acknowledged the importance of historic change. The existence of these cultural boundaries and cultural disharmonies only became manifest and were placed in bold relief once the demands of a rational civil society, as Voltaire saw and encouraged it, and the beliefs and practices of a people seemingly willing to assume the burden of tradition, came into conflict.[42]

The conflict was internal, as I suggested earlier, so that, for example, in the *Treatise*, in which he eloquently appeals for the reign of reason, of a time when Jews, Siamese, Turks, Muslims, and other non-Christians, as well as warring Christians, might be brothers under the same God; (*TT*, p. 89) and visualizes a society as a ship of passengers, destined for death, unless they man it in a spirit of generosity and brotherhood and save the lives of everyone aboard, lest the ship founder, drowning all (*TT*, p. 134). "The more sects there are," he wrote, "the less dangerous each one becomes; as they multiply so they weaken; and all are held in check by fair laws which prohibit tumultuous assembly, public insult, and incitement to sedition, laws which are kept in force by the consent of the people" (*TT*, p. 24). In his fable, the *Sermon du rabbin Akib*, we also read, "Let each person serve God in the religion into which he was born, without tearing out the heart of his neighbor. … [N]either fanatics, nor persecutors" (*OCM*, 24, 284). Voltaire used the execution of a Jesuit, Malagrida, who was condemned by the Inquisition on the demand of the Portuguese monarch, Joseph I, to urge toleration for the Jews.[43] He muddies his cautionary, yet hopeful, narrative of intolerance by substituting it for a rather odious verbal assault on Jews, whose history, he says, yields "not one instance of generosity, magnanimity or charity;" and then, as if to leaven his words, he adds, "and yet in the fog of this long and frightful barbarism, one may always discern rays of universal tolerance" (*TT*, p. 57). Then, as if to strengthen his case for tolerance even more, he informs us of the Pharisees and the Essenes—Jewish sects whose vision of the afterlife differed, yet tolerated one another:

> If one is prepared to examine Judaism closely, one will be surprised to find, in the midst of barbaric horrors, the most extraordinary spirit of tolerance. Yes, it is a paradox, but then nearly all people have been governed by some measure of contradiction; happy are those whose society is gentle though their laws be bloody.
>
> (*TT*, p. 63)

Bertram E. Schwarzbach objects to the use of Judaism as a bloodless abstraction and asks us to think rather of individual Jews as the victims of violent death and exile.[44] The abstraction is hardly a conceit and is not without its uses, however, not in the way in which Voltaire discusses it as a body of religious beliefs and practices; not, as well, in the ways in which it has been the subject of discourse within the body of Jewish homiletics and apologetics; not, finally, in the debates on the nature of modern Jewish identity. Daniel Boyarin makes the interesting but contentious point that, until the nineteenth century, Jews did not ascribe a "particular status" to the term, and that to think of it only as a religion is to deny its ethnic, national, linguistic, and national richness. He argues, ingeniously but not with entire credibility, that it was a Christian invention: the "Church needed 'Judaism' to be a religious 'Other,' and maintained and reified this term as the name of a religion."[45] Ironically, Voltaire needed the term as well, but he saw it in a sordid light, and certainly not as a religious other, the way in which the Church saw it, but as the origin of the Christian other.

He meant, perhaps, to include his own contradictory self in defining the other, but the sting was not lessened by invoking paradox as an explanation for Jewish tolerance. Neither did he, by remembering the Essenes and Pharisees, blunt his earlier account of how Jews, while prospering under a tolerant regime in Rome, were responsible for persecuting the early Christians. He called for support from Suetonius, author of *The Twelve Caesars* to declare that the Romans, "far from persecuting the early Christians, tried to control the Jews who oppressed them" (*TT*, p. 34). We find ourselves drawn to give him the benefit of the doubt, perhaps because he seems to be taking us a little closer to the way in which he might reimagine a more satisfying, because more coherent, picture into which to fit ancient Hebrews and Roman Jews. But we draw back from his withdrawal, sensing that he might be anticipating his observations about Jewish tolerance might be seen, and turned against him, as a contradiction of his condemnation of barbaric Jewish extermination of their neighbors, and not only in their opposition to the early Christians. A close look at his brief chapter on Roman tolerance shows that Voltaire speaks, almost in the same breath, of the Jews as the most despised race in Rome. Yet, he argues that they benefited from Roman tolerance. It was not Roman intolerance that led, he insisted, to "the disaster which, under Nero, befell a few unhappy half-Jews and half-Christians" (*TT*, p. 35). If this were the case, what led to these measures? Voltaire does not say, and we are only slightly helped by his

remarks in the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, that fanatical opposition to another's beliefs is the source of persecution and murder ("Persécution," *OC*, 36, 428–32).

Clearly, he wishes to use every argument he can muster to support a rational position for an end to intolerance in civil society. We cannot be unsympathetic and be ungrateful to a thinker who directs his anger at the way in which, "Each hot dispute over a text of Scripture gave birth to furious rage, armed with sophistical argument in one hand and a dagger in the other, which plunged the whole of civilized mankind into madness and cruelty" (*TT*, p. 88). Driving him is his equation of morality and religion, minus its barbarism and superstition. Morality is found in all cultures; it is found in the hearts of all men, but he cannot resist adding that, "If the Jews are lacking in morality or lack morals, the Romans were experienced in it and made it glorious" ("Morale," *OC*, 36, 397–98).[46] Even so, the Jews sheath their swords rather than disturb a fragile peace, or threaten their essential community—"the communion with their brothers"—even with the Sadducees whose beliefs included their certainty that death meant extinction. They were as distant "from other Jews than Protestants are from Catholics" (*TT*, p. 62). The wonder is that Voltaire in this instance, as in a few others, demonstrated a strong historic sense, even as he did not comment—while, on other occasions he did—on the Sadducee non-belief in a system of rewards and punishments after death that acted as a moral force against vice, and was needed against those who had no sense of good and evil, and who, if left undisturbed, would eat away at the substance of social order. Such a moral force was identical to a natural religion understood through the use of reason and thus free of dogma, superstition, and empty ceremonies. Locke he commended for the idea that, so long as the citizen's beliefs were no threat to public order, he had a right to them (*TT*, p. 49).

With much circumspection, Voltaire follows Bayle on the rights of atheists in civil society, but he was alarmed at the thought that atheists could be virtuous, and he differed with Spinoza who, he said, was not only an atheist but also taught atheism. Atheists were not wicked, only confused. They reasoned badly and did not understand creation and the origin of evil, and relied on a doctrine of necessity to explain the mysteries of existence. Voltaire, in his anti-materialist mode, challenged the Sadducee belief that the soul perished with the body. He took pains to argue that for Bayle, fanaticism was more dangerous than atheism, exempting him, though not straightforwardly, from the accusation of promoting atheism (See "Athée, athéisme," *OC*, 35, 375–92, esp. 388–9). Thus, Spinoza was branded unjustifiably, while Bayle was not given his proper day in court. He also seems to have chosen passages in Bayle that were hostile to Judaism and paid little attention to his demonstration of sympathy and respect for some Jewish attitudes, notably his condemnation of intolerance of the Jews.[47] Though sharing with Spinoza the criticism of Jews who were, he said, leading "anachronistic" lives, rooted in ancient superstitions, Bayle did not turn his eyes

away from their history of forced conversions, having, as a living testimony, not only his own plight, but also the conversions and expulsions of French Protestants.[48] His attitudes were not totally removed from typical notions of the day. But he was not afraid to say that Jews were no better and no worse than all other human beings. They may be unreasonable, but they are so because of the education they receive, a fate not reserved for them alone, but one they shared with all others.[49] In an indignant, perhaps more resigned, but mocking, mood, Voltaire wrote that Bayle was persecuted by men who were being persecuted by fugitives who would themselves have been delivered to the flames in their own country; and that these fugitives, in turn, were opposed by other fugitives (Jansenists), who had been expelled by the Jesuits, who were finally sharing a similar fate ("Philosophe," *OC*, 36, 443).

In Chapter 18 of the *Treatise*, he makes a distinction between beliefs and crimes that are committed by those who casuistically proclaim them as errors, citing as examples, first, Jesuit attacks against Jansenists, and, second, Protestant sects who are no less ready to attack one another in the name of God, and then concludes with the enormously ironic, but unfunny, non-sequitur that Jews, more than the others, are prepared to act criminally against non-Jews:

> The Jews appear to have more right than anyone to rob and murder us. Though there are a hundred examples of toleration in the Old Testament, there are also some instances of severity sanctioned by law. God occasionally ordered them to kill all idolators, sparing only marriageable girls; they look upon us as idolators; and though we are tolerant towards them these days, they could easily, if they got the upper hand, denude the world of all but our marriageable daughters.
>
> (*TT*, p. 79)

Is this hyperbole in the cause of truth or genuine belief? It is sometimes hard to know.

Overall, the inference is that fanatic beliefs are not only criminal because they threaten civil society; Jewish beliefs, because they are an inextricable part of Jewish law, are menacing in a way that sets them apart from the beliefs of others. They cannot be extirpated, they can only be held in check. They are the same today as they were at the dawn of Jewish history. While tolerance may be extended to them, because there is no prospect that they will ever become the wielders of power, by raising that possibility as a specter, Voltaire shows how much he himself harbors fears of, and contempt for, them, preferring to see them from afar if at all. This allows him the luxury of intellectual and emotional self-indulgence. Jews, he sees as unchanged and unchanging, from the beginning of recorded history to the present. They are a thick and deep part of the past, of an Ur-history, and they will always be the same. They remain, and will forever remain, unalterably others. Voltaire abandons his sense of history, it seems, at will.

Christian sects are capable of giving up ancient and injurious beliefs. They can move ahead. They can, given instruction, set aside as obsolete their old rituals and superstitions and see them for their true worth. But while fanaticism can be extinguished, neither Judaism nor atheism will yield to reason. He wrote as if it were an undeniable fact that without a belief in God, human beings would indulge all their wishes and destroy society. A society worthy of its name recognized the value of virtue; a society that did not reward it, that did not hold in check the most vicious expressions and deeds human beings are capable of, would be deadly.

His condemnation of atheism has much the same ring as his diatribe against Judaism, except for the fact that Jewish fear of punishment maintained social bonds. In the allusion to the young women, who, in his moral tale, *Histoire de Jenni ou le Sage et l'Athée*, written some dozen years after the *Treatise on Tolerance*, close to the end of his life, are lost to prostitution, in contrast to a female society without men who have been exterminated, Voltaire's images, recited by his alter ego, Freind, an Anglican divine, are evocatively the same:

> The pathetic yet violent atheist will, without injuring himself, be stupid if he does not kill you to rob you of your money. Thenceforth all that keeps society together will be shattered, every secret crime will cover the earth like locusts which, at first scarcely perceived, will descend and ravage the countryside; the lower class of people will then become a horde of brigands, the same as our thieves of whom only one in ten are hung at our assizes. They waste their lives in taverns with prostitutes; they beat them, and they fight among themselves … Every day they start off with an abominable cycle of brutalities.
>
> Yes, my friends, atheism and fanaticism are two poles of a universe of confusion and horror. The small zone of virtue is to be found between these two poles: walk firmly along this path. Believe in a good God, and be good. That is all that the great legislators, Locke and Penn asked from their peoples.[50]

The arch pillar of the middle Enlightenment, seeking arguments to show how reasonable tolerance is, cannot really make up his mind to include Jews or atheists. But his sharpest barbs are reserved for the former. In spite of their capacity for accepting heterogeneous views among themselves, they were not capable and they were unwilling to live side by side with other peoples, adopt their languages and customs, and share in the general culture. In fact, there was, as we shall find in the next chapter in his voluminous treatment of *moeurs* in Western and non-Western societies from ancient to modern times, ample evidence and examples of how Jews in scattered parts of the world did so live.

Enlightenment's reason had its limits, as Rousseau knew. What he said about the abbé Saint-Pierre he could have said about Voltaire, but recognizing at the

same time that Voltaire acknowledged reason's limitations and acknowledged human frailty:

> This rare man (the abbé Saint-Pierre), an ornament to his age and to his kind—the only man, perhaps in all the history of the human race whose only passion was the passion for reason—nevertheless only advanced from error to error in all his systems, because he wished to make all men like himself instead of taking them as they are and as they will continue to be. Whilst thinking that he was working for his contemporaries he was in fact laboring for creatures of his imagination.[51]

In the case of the Jews, the images, confused and contradictory, constitute only the mildest prefiguring of the terrible dread, anguish and killing floors of the twentieth century, when reason, substituting for God, was like God, absent. For despite the fact that the movement towards Jewish emancipation, which began in earnest in the eighteenth century, made enormous strides in the nineteenth, and met but barely survived the murderous challenges of the twentieth century, the scourge of anti-Semitism and Jewish reaction to it carries some echoes of its earlier manifestations. The limits of the modern age, however, are not simply the limits of reason, or its absence, which Voltaire regretfully acknowledged. They were brutally exposed in the twentieth century when the dialectic of knowledge and reality brought an awareness of the mismatch between the limits of the first and the limitlessness of the second.

# 3 Voltaire's Jews among the world's peoples and nations

## Human nature and human culture

Voltaire's inquiries into the history of the Jews of the Old Testament, and his scattered comments on the Jews of his day, as I have already noted, have now moved beyond the ritualized debates that have cast him either among the ranks of anti-Semites, or have attempted to rescue him from such an egregious stain. Yet questions abound. Voltaire turned to consider Judaism in its ancient and contemporary garb when leaders of the Jewish community in France were more than ever, as the eighteenth century progressed, chafing under the chronic feelings of insecurity, a product of the regulations and restrictions imposed on their occupations and property, and beginning the struggle to have them revoked, end ghetto life and justify their existence as modern Jews outside it without giving up their "Jewishness." They tried to do so amidst much controversy over how the modernizing movement in the eighteenth century, with the possibility of changes in their corporate and civil existence in a monarchical state, would affect whatever it was thought made up the enduring features of Judaism. Changes were indeed occurring. They have been documented in north-eastern France, particularly in Metz, where after a century or so, Jewish leadership increasingly underwent a slow process of secularization that challenged the rabbinate's powers over every aspect of Jewish life.[1] Together with the fact that Jews and gentiles were beginning to mingle with one another, even before the Enlightenment made its influence felt, "the initiatives undertaken in Metz, and later in Alsace, typified a first stage in the unfolding of modernity," which took place in the last decades of the *ancien régime* when the state "level[ed] down [the traditional powers accorded to] corporations."[2] Ironically, Bordeaux, as a port city where secularization might have had a larger impact because of Jewish commercial success, supported rabbinic authority and would continue to do so after the Revolution. The economic importance of Bordeaux in pre-Revolutionary France may have eased Jewish inclusion in civic and cultural life and made political emancipation less of an issue than among Ashkenazi Jews.[3]

Voltaire questioned how they could do so without accepting assimilation. Even if they did, he could not imagine success on the grounds that Jews

could or would not relinquish their belief in their uniqueness. Within the body of his commentaries based on his ideas of the Old Testament and, as well, his views of contemporary Jews, he was prone to outbursts of impatience and anger that worked against his elevation of the power of reason to challenge religious authority. We are heading further into perhaps the most important underlying problem that Judaism posed for Voltaire: in what ways and instances did essentialism—the seemingly inherent and unchangeable features of a people, when closely linked with popular as well as elitist perceptions of difference—shape his images of them? We looked at these questions in the previous chapter. As we continue our search, we will find that he did not always take enough care to distinguish his putative historic investigations from his views of contemporary Jews, so that he tended to conflate the two in a continuous line through time and space. But, an equally compelling question comes to mind once we reject a univocal view of, and instead give weight to, the dual nature of essentialism: Voltaire exploited both sides of this dualism, but with illogical results. Essentialism is, as I have argued earlier, usually associated with particularism. In what seems to be one of its extreme forms, Arthur Hertzberg, stated that "the essence of Judaism is the affirmation that the Jews are the chosen people; all the rest is commentary." He angrily chastised those Jews who embraced the ideals of the Enlightenment and emancipation, and who claimed "that both what they are and what they believe belong in the same realm as other faiths and communities of Western man," because "the only people some modern Jews have ever convinced that Jews are 'like everybody else' is themselves. Both their friends and enemies outside the Jewish community have known that it is not so."[4] Emancipation was, therefore, a delusion. This brings Hertzberg paradoxically, yet perversely, close to the position taken by Voltaire, whom he called in his earlier book:

> the vital link, the man who skipped over the Christian centuries and provided a new, international, secular anti-Jewish rhetoric in the name of European culture rather than religion. The defeat of the emancipation of the Jews of Europe existed in embryo even before that process began.[5]

Voltaire's unambiguous assimilationism placed Judaism on another plane altogether, unconcerned as he was for its survival. Essentialism, however, may also be linked with—not surprisingly—ambiguous, inconclusive, and simplified notions of an essential and universal human nature. These came increasingly to be tested within the constraints of a nascent science of anthropology whose earliest acolytes were fascinated, yet puzzled, by human difference. Jews did not enter clearly into Voltaire's anthropology. They were historic figures, belonging to humankind, but were strangely, and somewhat mysteriously, accorded a different, yet ambivalent, unique status. The ancient Jews were capable of human folly and outrageous collective

homicide, as all humans are, but Voltaire did not include them fully among the different distributions of humanity. Thus, Jewish particularism was only fragmentarily linked with an anthropologic essentialism; he left the Jews out of his conceptually weak equation. At the heart of his essentialism lay a grave doubt about the full range of a commonality among peoples. Moreover, Jews, though closer to Western peoples, would never be able to become part of a homogeneous community, unless they ceased being Jews. Voltaire's interests, as his polemics in the Calas, Sirven, and La Barre cases amply show, leaned more to the conditions under which natural laws that he said, confusingly, are the common preserve of humankind, and should thus guarantee justice through improved systems of law, But he made no real effort to invoke natural law and justice in the case of Jews whose "separatism" as a "nation" was made a condition of their "privileges" under the *ancien régime*. It was their separatism that he had to explain, both in the past and in his own time, and whether it could survive into the future unchanged.[6]

We can gauge the depth of his confusion on how to locate Jews and Judaism, in the past and in the present, how, in other words, to fit them into his historiography, which was founded on relatively more solid grounds than his anthropology, by exploring further his conception of human nature, as he sought to distinguish their "essence" and to distinguish his views from what he regarded as the best, but most fallacious, example of a Jewish illusion. Without mentioning Descartes, he singled out Pascal as the thinker most responsible for the notion that thought constituted the essence of man. For him, Pascal's belief that reason was powerless and a feeble reed upon which to base a search for truth and certainty, was based on the unmerited power Pascal gave to faith in a revealed God—not the kind of truth Voltaire prized. In his critique of Pascal's metaphysics, human beings would, if their essence indeed lay in thought, have to be "thinking continually, just as matter always has mass and density." Thought, he said, "is sometimes weak, sometimes strong, sometimes reasonable, sometimes foolish. . . . Essence is something else; it never varies."[7] He did not explore the complexities of Pascal's *Pensées* on thought, truth, reason, and faith, as Ernst Cassirer brilliantly observed, and took the easy way out of a profound problem in human existence. Voltaire slipped away from it by moving on to assert what he considered, in a modern vein, as the inextinguishable and restless human need to test the many sides of its nature, which Pascal put down as a species of idle *divertissement*.[8] But, in doing so, Voltaire was forced to question his own skepticism when, confronted by the problem of evil, he could not turn entirely away from the question Pascal raised and concluded that there was no happy journey for humankind. Thus, paradoxically, he seemed to heed Pascal's warning that unless human beings "'seek in [their] doubt,' they will be unhappy, or if they react to their doubt with cheer and presumption, their behavior would be too extravagant or too monstrous to be described."[9] Nevertheless, Voltaire's deep strain of ribaldry

was a fallback position that remains indelibly imprinted in his thought even as he took up this problem, no more so than in his article on Job, which I will treat later.

But, if thought was only one of several attributes—and certainly not the most important—which, he argued, were common to all human beings, he did not fail to identify what he believed they were and why they constituted the meaning of being human. These, he believed, could be found in the search for what was common to human beings across the Western and non-Western parts of the globe, but the search had to take account of how they were to be epitomized in the eighteenth century by the polarities of civilized and primitive (though he reserved a special place for China) societies. It is within such a context that his thoughts on ancient and contemporary Judaism, and his commitment to a notion of essentialism, may be further clarified. It highlights the tensions between his various works and the internal tensions arising from the uneasy relationship between reason and power.

Voltaire, as many of his fellow *philosophes* also maintained, appeared to believe in a single human nature. Human biology is, first of all, undifferentiated. "[O]ne can reduce men if you wish to a single species, because they all have the same vital organs, sensibility, and movement" (*OCM*, 12, 385). The real problem came to the surface once biology was left behind: "It is man that I examine," he told Frederick the Great:

> in order to see if his composition is of virtue or of vice. That is the important point with regard to him, and I do not say so merely with regard to a certain society living under certain laws, but for the whole human race: for you, sir, who will one day sit on a throne, for the wood cutter in your forest, for the Chinese philosopher, and for the savage in America.
>
> (Voltaire to Frederick the Great, c. October 15, 1737, D1315, *OC*, 6, 227)

Man, rather than palace revolutions; humankind as history reveals its nature: these questions should be the task of historians. The description and chronology of battles was a trivial pastime (*OCM*, 12, 73). Thus, he asserted that man, wherever he might be found and lived, and under whatever the laws he obeyed, was his subject. Humans develop, he said, the same needs, desires, passions, and ideas; in seeking to satisfy them, human beings were not isolates, as Rousseau, "an enemy of society," said, but had lived as social beings everywhere. This did not commit him to the view that, even if men are "equal in essential things,"—all human beings, for example, possessed notions of justice, which were determined by local social conditions—they are equal "as members of society." He gave a weak answer to the existence, on the one hand, of social inequality, and did not expand his belief, on the other hand, in the equality of natural rights, asserting simply

that men "should have the same power over their own persons, their families, their possessions," without pausing to think how such security might be achieved in the absence of social justice—or, more appropriately for the subject of this text—when he avoided the question of extending or denying such rights to Jews or to atheists, however zealously he fought for those of Protestants.[10]

Yet he soon gave up this search for a universal human nature, in favor of evidence that humans differed widely, or perhaps he changed his route because he did not feel wholly comfortable with abstract ideas and sought out particular instances of humanity. This may best be seen in his thoughts about the non-European world. The same lack of deep curiosity stalked him: differences between Africans and Europeans were, it transpired for him, more than skin deep. The internal organs of the first were black and those of the second, white. "Their round eyes, their flat noses, and their invariable thick lips, their differently configured ears, their woolly heads, even the measure of their intelligence, make for a prodigious difference between them and other species of men" (*OCM*, 11, 6).[11] And no one could doubt that if Americans, Albinos and Darians were all equally men, they were so in the same way as pine, oak, and pear trees are all equally trees (*OCM*, 12, 357). The Albinos, whom the Portuguese discovered in Africa, by nature, were inferior to Negroes and Hottentots, but above monkeys, just one degree separating man from animals (*OCM*, 12, 367–68). But the trade in African slaves appalled him. The European appetite to gratify "new (artificial) needs" was met by the labor of a 100,000 slaves in Santo Domingo. The unending traffic in slaves had no sight in end, witness the cost of 1500 livres—a huge sum—paid in 1772 for the purchase of one slave. Indeed, the slave trade was crucial to the prosperity of French commerce which had reached new heights of expansion. Despite African complicity in the sale of slaves from various parts of Africa to the white conquerors of the New World, and upon which Europeans based their wealth, the ultimate responsibility lay in Europe. How dare we, he exclaims, speak about the rights of peoples (*OCM*, 12, 417).

Michèle Duchet attributes Voltaire's ideas on human nature to the philosophy of mechanism, that cluster of beliefs which posits a uniform nature following the same rules, and suggests that for him, as for Fontenelle, physics and theology constituted a single science. But her attempt to locate an intellectual lineage for his ideas does not deal effectively with his failure to present a satisfactory explanation for the ways in which human biology and human society are related. Perhaps it is to his credit to refuse to be bound by a categorical answer to a difficult question, but if his refusal left him with an escape clause, if we extend the question to the Jews, it could not but fail to deal with the future of Jews in the society that he imagined would be enlightened by reason.[12] And this he failed to do.

Though he did not confront Buffon directly, it is clear that he differed from him. Voltaire was convinced that human differences could not be

attributed to climate alone: Africans retained their color even when living in temperate climates. He was similarly convinced that the Lapps were a physically distinct people—"une espèce particulière"–differing from Norwegians, Swedes, and Icelanders, but this time he says that the Lapps are, as a distinct race, made "for the climate in which they live." Nature, which produces the vegetation and animals, native to specific regions also produces "new species" of humans living there. No catastrophic event in one portion of the globe threw or drew people from hospitable into inhospitable regions. The Lapps, as well as the peoples of Asia, America, and Africa, have lived where they have always lived and constitute a different human species (*OCM*, 12, 222–23). They live in their aboriginal purity. Against Buffon, Voltaire wanted to stress a theory that would give the edge or even priority to culture and history, to those forces in certain parts of the globe, preeminently the West, that transformed its peoples through art and thought, that were absent from, and not to be found in places like the subarctic. Nor in America: "human understanding is not as well formed in the new world as in the old. [[L]'entendement humain n'est pas si formé dans le nouveau monde que dans l'ancien.]," due to insufficient and poor nourishment and undeveloped animal husbandry, all presumably because there exist subgroups of humans, for example, American savages, who were entirely the captives of their nature (*OCM*,12, 390). This image of American aboriginals and the Negroes transported to the New World was somewhat mitigated by a critique of their treatment by the Spaniards, who did not regard them "comme une espèce humaine," but was seen somewhat differently by Las Casas who described almost all of them as gentle and timid, but that their "weak temperaments" made them natural slaves (*OCM*, 12, 401–2). Not quite supporting the pseudospeciationist idea that the differences between one people and another are the differences between human and non-human, Voltaire comes close to suggesting just that. Besides paying no heed to the crafts and arts of aboriginals—a very late development in anthropologic studies—Voltaire cannot, when he calls on nature to rescue him, adduce a solid theory explaining the uneven development of different cultures.

There was another, perhaps even more powerful, reason for Voltaire's specific understanding of human society. Buffon's naturalism dislodged God more radically than Voltaire was prepared to accept. Notwithstanding his belief that the mind is where man has to start if he is to understand his own nature and the myths that he constructed to keep him from knowing it, the thought that nature, including human nature, not God, was what human beings had to turn to in order to understand themselves was, if that was the direction of human knowledge, still a little too frightening. "Three things ceaselessly impinge on the human mind," he said, "climate, government and religion. This is the only way to explain the enigma of this world. [Trois choses influent sans cesse sur l'esprit des hommes, le climat, le gouvernement, et la religion; c'est la seule manière d'expliquer l'enigme de ce monde.]" (*OCM*, 13, 178). As we have seen more than once, it is the last to

which he gave greatest importance. His thought ran along a modest time scale of centuries, from classical times to the emergence of nations and the reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV. What was more important, nature or culture? In this brief horizon of time, history was a history of pillage and war, but, at the same time, an instinctive love of order preserved people from destruction; it is a force that secretly animates them; it is "one of nature's springs [un des ressorts de la nature]," a force that forms the law codes of nations, a force that obeys laws everywhere (*OCM*, 13, 180). It acts as a restraint on arbitrary power, especially in Asia and Turkey where custom, law and *moeurs* are not easily flouted (*OCM*, 13, 181). Thus, human nature, it would seem at this instant in Voltaire's thought, is the same across the globe. It is primary; culture builds upon its foundations, producing varieties of human behavior. To be sure, custom comprehends and absorbs *moeurs*, but nature creates an underlying unity of conduct. Everywhere it sets up a small number of invariable principles. Culture (his word) is only productive of a variety of societies. Europe has gone further than other parts of the world: "This part of the world is incomparably more populous, more civilized, wealthier, more enlightened. [Cette partie du monde est incomparablement plus peuplée, plus riche, plus éclairée.]" (*OCM*, 13, 182–83).

Voltaire posed a principle of identity—all human beings are bound by the same passions and the faculty of reason, and, moreover, the laws of nature, including human nature, would always trump culture—but he also argued that these scattered peoples obeyed a principle of differentiation that explained and justified how human beings live with, and accept, hierarchies of intelligence. His understanding of a fundamental human nature was not, he believed, incompatible with the proofs of differences among the various parts of humankind, due to climate, geography, and custom, and it was conceivable (though highly unlikely, given his conviction, as we have just seen) that the human mind was not everywhere as richly endowed as in Europe, but that in the course of time the Brazilian aboriginals could produce a Newton and a Locke.[13] In addition, he rejected monogenetic notions of a single ancestry, and thereby challenged the Christian doctrine of creationism. The plenitude of God was rather to be found in the evidence of the various forms of mankind, some of which survived and others disappeared. Jews were dropped from the eighteenth century anthropologic screen and located on a more accessible legal one. Ancient Jews were, to be sure, primitive, sharing with other primitive peoples in the Middle East, taboos and rituals, but they had at least advanced to a level of civilization that placed them ahead of primitive peoples in other parts of the world. Jews, as racial theories were later to brand as a distinct race, were in the eighteenth century, not seen as such, but rather as a distinct people, or "nation." In the corporate society of the *ancien régime*, Jews had no individuality apart from their membership in a legally recognized group with its designated privileges. Presumably, the privileges could disappear, swallowed up in a future universal harmony, as Voltaire believed they should, putting all, in this

respect, on the same footing as a preliminary to universalism: For Voltaire, "God remains," Duchet writes, "the sole principle of continuity that permits the passage from the relationship of beings to universal harmony. [Dieu est le seule principe de continuitée de passer de la ontiguité des êtres à l'harmonie universelle.]"[14] All primitive peoples, past and present, have left records of war, revolting customs, including human sacrifice and cannibalism. Indeed, cannibalism was not an American specialty. Its sources were almost always hunger. To be sure, the Brazilians, like the Greeks, were driven to it because, lacking Gods to whom they could make sacrifices, they chose instead to eat their prisoners of war (*OCM*, 12, 405–6). Yaweh threatened the Jews in Deuteronomy and Ezekiel with the horrors of cannibalizing their own children when, resisting his commandments, from times of abundance they fell on times of hunger (*OCM*, 12, 389–90). Thus, the histories of non-European peoples must be set against those of others, including the Jews, and even the more recent examples of European cannibalism in wartime, for example, during the religious wars. Cannibalism, moreover, was not as widespread as was believed; its chroniclers exaggerated its occurrence. It was abhorrent but not nearly as barbaric as the murderous conquest of the peoples of the New World and South Africa. While man is endowed with reason, he seems, like the animals, to have an innate propensity for war. In Canada, he remarks, the words for man and warrior are synonyms (*OCM*, 19, 318).

Montesquieu, he criticizes, for arguing the necessity of preventive war on the grounds that any state justifying it had to be sure that it was threatened,[15] a certainty that was at root threadbare, as it was undermined by contingency. It "amounts to killing your neighbor for fear that your neighbor (who is not attacking you) might be in a position to attack you; in other words, you must risk ruining your country in the hope of ruining for no good reason someone else's" (*OCM*, 19, 322). War was, he concluded wearily, a form of madness, the natural state of human beings, he added, echoing Hobbes, who was only repeating what all sensible people say: "Everything is either a matter of contractual agreement or force."[16] The best that could be hoped for was a balance of state power, a judicious alliance system and a wise economic policy free of religious cant (*OCM*, 19, 322).

But human beings are everywhere governed by a law of nature proscribing deceit, larceny, and murder. *Moeur*s cannot contradict nature: civil or religious laws cannot triumph over the laws of nature. Justice depends neither on climate nor forms of government. On what then does it rest? If it is to be seen as absolute, unaffected by *moeurs*, will it ever be achieved, and if so how? Again, we are taken back to reason, for presumably justice would fulfill reason's demands. And, once again, on the other hand, when Voltaire clearly notes that what one human group calls virtue is called vice by another, his historic relativism, the other side of him, emerges to stand as a sentinel against absolutes. *Moeurs* were not, therefore, timeless. There is nothing transhistoric about them. Ours, he said, are different from those of

ancient Egyptians and the Jews. The Hebrews, for instance, were not aghast at the multiple fornications related in Ezechiel, Ch. 23, and he correctly said that the touching of genitals to seal a promise was a mark of respect, as we know from Genesis 24:9 ("Ezéchiel," *OC*, 36, 88, 93–94). But he takes this stance uneasily, barely swallowing his disgust. Presumably the variety of sexual mores does not fall outside the natural law. And to back up his claims, such displays of human behavior in the past and throughout the non-Western parts of the globe were not uncommon. There was no perfectly harmonious society, no impartial society of nations exercising controls, waiting for humanity; no Eldorado, as Candide discovered in his tale of war, rape, and other horrors.

Ernst Cassirer some time ago wrote that Voltaire's philosophic achievement as a historian was to reject final causes in favor of empirical ones: history's meaning is "the process by which reason emerges empirically and becomes comprehensible to itself."[17] The effects bear no visible relationship to their presumed causes. Only the effects are concrete and manageable. Still, no society that aimed at reducing pain and encouraging decency could dispense with reason, even while recognizing its severe limitations. Reason, it is also clear, could take mankind only so far. It has limits. Thus, as, in his history/*conte* of *Candide*, we may grasp the usefulness of history's lessons, but only through their effects. When we complete our reading of *Candide*, we feel that we are left with the outlook of a man resigned to observing, first, that work is the only way to escape poverty, boredom, and vice, and, second, that the smallest of differences, let alone large ones, can and will likely continue to divide humankind into murderous gangs that tragically wreak havoc. If such is humanity's fate, small gains are the best that we may hope for. History is the only way to know this. Indeed his intention is clear at the very beginning of *La Philosophie de l'histoire*: the stance of a philosopher is not appropriate for anyone who wants to learn from history; the most useful thing we can draw from it are not its useful truths but its useless errors (*OCM*, 11, 3). Jean Starobinski is quite right to say about Voltaire's philosophy of history that "So goes the world, says the ironic consciousness—free, playful, and detached. And so we go too, for we are in the world, and not even ironic consciousness can escape its flux."[18]

## The *Essai sur les Moeurs* as Universal History

Voltaire wrote different versions of the *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations* to which we now will turn to see where he was heading, as a philosopher looking at the Jewish past as part of, but not the central, core of world history previously seen by Christian theologians as the working out of Jewish and Christian prophecy. He began it in 1741. A new edition appeared in 1762, and three years later the final version appeared with *La philosophie de l'histoire* serving as an introduction, which was written after he had completed his histories of Louis XIV and Louis XV and the *Essai*.[19]

His history was not, as Collingwood tells us, like those philosophies of history that would follow in the next century that raised "history itself . . . to a higher power and [became] philosophical as distinct from empirical."[20] Voltaire merges his survey of the available knowledge and his imagination to give an account of the social culture and religious life of the various peoples of the globe that experienced different historic trajectories. His scheme, it is important to note again, failed to make a distinction between eighteenth century understandings of history and anthropology. Clear boundaries between them had not yet been established. The failure to establish boundaries may have been the result of epistemologic naïveté, but, if so, it also showed how the two could be brought together in a way that modern anthropologists and historians might recognize in their studies of political culture, which incorporate oral myths and visual symbols peculiar to one society or to many. *Candide* is, for example, besides everything else, a story of clashing cultures as well as a story of universal rapine and war. Voltaire's *Essai* may be seen as Enlightenment's answer to the barbarisms and self-deceptions of the past, and, to a lesser degree, those of his own time, moving slowly to a future when absolute reason would presumably leave a dirty history behind.

If *Candide* is prepared to live in a world in which small differences may happily be taken for granted, reducing mutual enmities and checking inhumane behavior and keeping it under control, Voltaire reserves a special but ambiguous place in his *Essai* for the perceived differences of biblical and post-biblical Jews. We should also bear in mind, as we move into his general history of culture, religion, economics, and politics, first, that it reproduces on a vaster scale the journeys that *Candide* and his fellow passengers make to far-flung parts of the planet where they learn about different religions, beliefs, values, legal systems, and justice. It is, therefore, an oversimplification to say that he paid no heed to cultural variations, but he did so with the intention of finding favorite, rather than tested, examples of moral behavior, while condemning others for their offences, as he never tired of pointing out in his criticisms of the ancient Hebrews. In his universal history project, his telos was to minimize, perhaps arguably to erase, differences. His universal history demonstrates how extraordinary his undertaking was. It reveals a mind that takes into its orbit a huge burden of information, much of it structured around a comparative conceptual set of criteria, most of all centered on an unchanging human nature. But above all, there is his imperishable belief in the slow but certain signs of the efficacy of reason. His history emplotted an unfolding meliorism.

The project sets it apart from Montesquieu's. Voltaire had several things to say about *L'Esprit des Lois*. For him, the grand sweep of Montesquieu's narrative and analysis had, as its purpose, the restoration to the human species of its rights. "He fights superstition, he inspires morality." But he was "hardly any better informed than I was . . . [H]e shines more often than he illuminates, and he makes you wish that such a fine genius had made

more attempt to instruct rather than to surprise."[21] It was a work, on the other hand, that "men of letters and of the law in all countries . . . regard . . . as the code of reason and liberty." It invoked the rights of each in respect of the rights of the other. (Voltaire, *Commentaire sur L'Esprit des lois* 1777. "Avant–Propos," in *OCM*, 9, 405–6). It is clear that Voltaire's praise was not unreserved. He finds flaws in Montesquieu's history and challenges his interpretations of foreign customs, taking him, disingenuously, to task for venturing away from Europe, in an obvious ploy to show his own superior knowledge of European and non-European cultures and societies. One of the questions that has attracted the attention of Montesquieu scholarship—a key question for Voltaire's trajectory as well—is whether he gave up the idea of justice to concentrate on the social and historic foundations of institutionalized law.[22] The development of laws throughout history was, however, not at the center of Voltaire's concerns. Rather, it was how laws were embedded in culture. For him, they functioned as a kind of epiphenomenon. Laws were the expression of arbitrary power, as much the right of the powerful to subject the weak who were kept in their place by codes rooted in ancient usages that had lost their purpose and relevance over time, but which remained in place in the absence of purposeful questioning. Brilliantly, Voltaire exposed how laws changed as power relationships shifted from place to place, and how everyone, by the dictates of religion, or in naïve obedience to a moral vision of the law that they obeyed, followed its precepts, and thus could easily bring about their own destruction as well as that of others. At the same time, he appealed to what he called "a natural law independent of all human conventions" that turns out to be a recitation of the Decalogue! Laws had to be useful to humanity, he said, for when human needs change, the laws that remain unchanged become ridiculous.[23] He wanted to move humanity towards an overarching reason that would, even while recognizing cultural diversity, be understood as the instrument of universalizing values.

The term, *moeurs*, needs a firmer definition. Montesquieu used it to signify the use of internal restraints, distinguishing it from *manières*, those customs that were socially acceptable, both of which are, however, distinct from *lois.* Voltaire transformed the concept of *moeurs*, elevating it from its specific cultural manifestations throughout the globe to present it as a social ideal, as a form of European sociability, the goal of a slow human and universal movement from ignorance, superstition, and violence towards a refined and rational way of life.[24] History has its telos and reason is its weapon. Because of its sustained arguments, his *Essai* is as valuable a source as the *Dictionnnaire philosophique*, which had editions in 1764, 1765, and 1769. The *Essai* was begun earlier, but its final versions coincide almost perfectly with the publishing history of the *Dictionnaire* (*OC*, 35, 45–60). The *Dictionnaire*, which I will call on repeatedly to show its support for many of the arguments in the *Essai*, is, in format and style, a vast compilation of caricatural, satirical, and calculated provocations—but consistency

was not its distinguishing feature, as many of the entries reveal—designed to draw laughter from readers who could bask in self-congratulation, in short, from readers who, not only understood and approved of the literature of ridicule, but also were themselves the lucky carriers of refinement and sociability, and saw themselves as the custodians of civilized life and the bearers of reason and civility.[25] Be that as it may, the two works do not occupy totally separate spaces. For example, irony is not absent from the *Essai*. Voltaire cannot resist it, but it does not determine its tone. It was meant to be more serious, and drew copiously from classical literature, and less so from contemporary authors.[26]

The *Essai* thus belongs to a tradition of critical erudition and should perhaps be seen in the light of the biblical studies by Basnage, whom we will discuss more fully in Chapter 5. By the time Voltaire trained his guns on Bishop Bossuet's *Discours de l'histoire universelle*, Basnage's work had already undermined its authority. Voltaire's praise for Bossuet's work was backhanded: it no longer served as a model for historians, nor did it have imitators. Modern scholarship did note, he said condescendingly but accurately, the contradictions in his attempt to synchronize Jewish chronology with that of other peoples; only his style justifiably drew admiration. The force with which Bossuet described the *moeurs*, governments and the rise and decline of empires was truly majestic, but it was wrongheaded. Voltaire saw his own *Essai* not only as a critique of the Bishop of Meaux's universal history, but he also very consciously and proudly designed it as an impartial and objective study of the past, just as Basnage defended his own work in the same terms, but Voltaire, unlike Basnage, showed little sympathy for the Jewish past. Bossuet, it should be noted, detected with strong disapproval Spinozist elements in the work of Catholic biblical scholars, like the Oratorian priest, Richard Simon, who questioned the literal truth of Scripture. Bossuet was "scandalized" by the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*.[27] Indeed, Bossuet's history, which rests on Augustine, and which set out to refute Simon's arguments, served as a launching pad for Voltaire's. However, he went in the opposite direction by questioning Bossuet's premise of providentiality, though this is not to say that Voltaire placed human action above forces over which they had no control nor understand, except by advancing a secular version of Providence. Bossuet's understanding of the past was always centered on and related to Jewish destiny, and how it in turn formed the Christian structure of the world, justifying God's will. Voltaire regarded this as presumptuous and unforgivably partial.[28]

He saw his task as that of a superior and clear-eyed observer; and, furthermore, he adopted the tone of a gentle schoolmaster, nudging his readers to new insights by comparing not only his observing eye with others, but by comparing Jews with others. He does so even while he praises other cultures and religions, and implicitly condemns Judaism.[29] He devoted thirteen of the fifty-three chapters in *La Philosophie de l'histoire* to the Jews and discussed them in other chapters as well. God gave Asia to the Babylonians,

ushered in the reign of Cyrus, and sent the Romans to punish the Jews. Why subordinate, as Bossuet did, the study of "l'esprit des nations" for the purpose of exalting the petty achievements of a small people? The facts were otherwise: Asian kingdoms had existed long before this "vagabond horde of Arabs called Jews" found a small corner of the earth which they could call their own, created their laws, and fixed their religion. This "new, ignorant, crude people, perpetually deprived of the arts" were mere copiers, borrowing everything from others, he exclaimed as well in the *Dictionnaire philosophique* ("Abraham," *OC*, 35, 298). Why not pay heed to other cultures, both in the Orient and the West? They had a significant past and demanded further study. A Judeo–Christian focus only distorted the past. Even more pressing was the need to begin the work of revision and to consign futile conjecture about the apparent flooding and age of the Earth to the dust heap:

> A thousand local revolutions have certainly changed a part of the globe in its physical and moral aspects, but we do not know what they are; and men suddenly became aware of the need to write history as the history of humankind. It appears new to us, but it is (truly) ancient.
> (*OCM*, 11, 158, 164)[30]

It is not hard to see the direction he intends to follow. The ancient past must be seen for it was, and such a project will test the supposed primacy of the ancient Hebrews as the first mortals on earth. Thus, he takes us on an ever so brief excursion through geologic and geographic time. Land masses were altered over time; the World's geography changed; languages took time to develop; some peoples, like the Troglodytes, according to Pliny, never accomplished this skill. It was then that the first stories, which needed further study, of monstrous interspecies couplings were mentioned in Leviticus XIV and in Herodotus's history (*OCM*, 11, 7–10). There are, however, only the barest hints of a scheme to suggest that Voltaire was able to distinguish clearly between mythic and calendar time; they seem to merge as he discusses cults and superstitions. Reasoning by analogy at first serves, he speculated, as an explanation of cultural change and exchange throughout the globe, as human beings find answers to their insecurities from the devastations of a cruel and indifferent nature. Later, the past takes on a fabular hue as Greeks and Egyptians create their mythical pasts (*OCM*, 11 44–45). He plotted his account carefully, choosing to find the truth contained in his ironic comparison between European peasants and the "savages" of North America and Africa, praising American Indian tribes for their Spartan-like behavior, their sense of liberty, honor and courage, while pitying the former for their poverty and politely ridiculing their belief in Christian superstition. But there is also grimness in the irony (*OCM*, 11, 19). In both instances, Voltaire appears to regard peasants and savages as living outside history: they are voiceless; we can know them only through their gestures and their apparently primitive uses of language. They are,

thus, more the subjects of anthropologic than historic observation. Then there occurs a visible shift from savage to monotheistic cultures, pre-eminently, to that of the ancient Hebrews. Voltaire's narrative describes how ancient cultures and religions found expression for their beliefs, practiced pederasty, incest, infant sacrifice, and general human sacrifice, which he called "abominables holocaustes," singling out, to emphasize his point, the vengeful God of Leviticus and Numbers for his cruel and bloodily inspired commands to destroy the enemies of the Israelites. But then he appears to deconstruct the barbs by ridiculing them with allusions to the Old Testament's divine origins. He seeks to have the examples work for him doubly with the additional remark that, if we cannot understand and judge God's will, we can be satisfied with a simple historic fact. Was he confused about fact and myth? Or did he willfully label the last as history when it suited him? (*OCM*, 11, 103–6).

He briefly, but less than perfectly, took up an interesting question. Did the Israelites imagine their past, as other peoples did, as the mythology of a people, or as a recurrent affirmation of identity, and did he distinguish between the two? And if the first was the answer, what part of the mythology would they decide to embrace; that of the wandering chosen people or as settled inhabitants of Israel? Myth and illusion, bordering on delusion, are a common human heritage, was his answer, declaring that, while it gave comfort, such mythologizing perpetuated unreason, especially if it is fused with illusions of grandeur:

> Almost the entire world nourishes itself on illusions. There is almost no people that does not preserve in its archives or in its oral tradition some prediction that assures it that it will conquer the world. Even the Jews hoped, as did other peoples, to become masters of the universe, founded on a thousand oracles that we explain in a symbolic sense, and that they understand in a literal one (*OCM*, 11, 89).[31]

The need to believe in the miraculous has perverted common sense throughout time (*OCM*, 11, 93). What he is more clear about is to diminish the Old Testament's hold on the European mind. There is no abyss separating Israelite from non-Jewish instances of cruelty: the annals describing the murders and savagery of the Merovingians are as reprehensible, for example, as those committed by the kings of Judea and Israel (*OCM*, 11, 154). They should be equally condemned. When he writes of the historic neglect of the Arabic cultures, he uses them to say that, like all the others he has been describing, they have not been given their due "in our histories fabricated in our Western world. The tiny Jewish nation, which has become the object and foundation of our supposedly universal histories, in which certain kinds of historians copy each other's work and overlook three-quarters of the world" (*OCM*, 11, 46).[32] As well as in these bits of comparative anthropology, he treats us to comparative history, displaying a

sense of the world beyond Europe, with the reminder that Chinese civilization outpaced Europe's by almost 4000 years (*OCM*, 11, 57).

Reason is, thus, the monopoly of no one group; it is universally shared; and in the long run people everywhere can reasonably judge the laws by which they are governed, because they can sense if the laws conform or are opposed to the principles of pity and justice lodged in their hearts (*OCM*, 11, 23). Voltaire is advancing on two fronts. One is to pronounce on sentiments that he deems to be universal; the other is to reject the alleged universality of the Old Testament. He does not quite say that the Jews have a proper share of universalism's values, but he seems more inclined to deny it to them, thinking no doubt of how often, in his view of them, their biblical selves, by attacking and murdering their ancient enemies, betrayed those values. The profane rather than the divine history of the Jews had to be brought to light, he writes, arguing that the best ancient historians, including Herodotus, never mentioned the Exodus from Egypt as it was described as God's miracle in the Old Testament (*OCM*, 11, 62). The aim is to enclose the Jewish culture of the Old Testament in a larger context of cultural development, one that did not ignore differences, but nevertheless one that looked for similar beliefs and practices:

> What one ought especially to observe about Egypt and all the nations is that their opinions were never constant, since their laws were never uniform, in spite of the attachment that men felt towards their ancient customs. Geometry alone is unchanging; everything else varies continually. (*OCM*, 11, 67)[33]

When one reads about ancient festivals or ancient temples, be assured that they are works of error and over the centuries take on a sacred aura, he says, and then tweaking his modern readers' noses, he tells us that "in historic times . . . the noblest truths find few followers. [dans les temps historiques . . . les plus nobles vérités trouvent peu de sectateurs]" (*OCM*, 11, 71–72).

No matter how often, he wrote, modern scholars exposed the glaring contradictions in the Old Testament, beginning with Exodus, the appeals to the divine will of the Lord God, sanctioned by the Church, were constantly raised (*OCM*, 11, 115). Here Voltaire bypasses Abraham Ibn-Ezra (Voltaire's Aben-Esra), Maimonides, and Nugnès, preferring the interpretations of more contemporary authorities in the field, such as Jean Le Clerc, a clergyman who taught in France in the early 1680s and argued that religion was subject to critical examination,[34] Conyers Middleton, a Cambridge divine who in the mid-eighteenth century was seen by some as a Socinian and deist,[35] and a group he called *Théologiens de Hollande.*[36] Biblical Jews had to be treated in the same way as the Greeks and Scythians, by "weighing probabilities and discussing facts" (*OCM*, 11, 110). They were primitive, powerless, had no useful weapons and yet, according to Scripture, fought victoriously in battle. Such contradictions must be left to scholars to

resolve. What will we learn about them from their own writings? "Every people has its marvels; but everything is wondrous in the Jewish people. [Chaque people a ses prodiges; mais tout est prodigue chez le people juif.]" (*OCM*, 11, 112). It is quite clear, Voltaire writes, tongue in cheek, that their exploits are pure fictions. No one can give them credence, given the exaggerated numbers of warriors in the texts, and no one should get away with the pious remark that God willed it, the Church believes it, and therefore we ought to believe it as well. "Everything in the Book of Moses is supernatural. [Tout est surnaturel dans Moïse.]" (*OCM*, 11, 112). Thus, Voltaire begins his critique of Moses. Some scholars have described the lawgiver as a highly skilled politician; others see him as a thin reed used by God. Voltaire sees Moses as a plaything of God, a helpless leader, impotent in battle, inarticulate, dragging his followers into the desert for 40 years. Only God is there to lighten the burden by his miracles, and sweeten all his defects, including his massacre of the worshippers of the golden calf. For Voltaire, it was inconceivable that Moses, proclaimed as a lawgiver, had not spoken of the soul's immortality, the need to control crime and greed, and the systems of punishments and rewards after death; beliefs that were common to the Egyptians, Phoenicians, Mesopotamians, and Persians, and would be adopted several thousand years later by the Essenes and Pharisees. All waited on divine will. God presumably bails Moses out, but leaves him in ignominious solitude and passivity. Voltaire shifts the story from God to Moses, as others after him did for different and conflicting reasons. In doing so, he lets God off the hook. There is no reason to seek further. All we have to do is to recognize God as vengeful, pitiless, and cruel, while we are asked to take pity on Moses (*OCM*, 11, 112–16). Here, Voltaire overreaches himself. Without being fully aware of this lapse, he misses the whole thrust of Exodus as a story that, by magnifying God, yet not minimizing his arbitrariness, raises difficult problems of interpretation.

If we move on to another example, we find that the manner in which he deals with the Book of Psalms seriously distorts their intent and meaning. Scholars, such as Adele Berlin and Marc Brettler, agree that in their "style, vocabulary, and forms of expression," they are not dissimilar from other Middle Eastern prayers.[37] This gives weight to Voltaire's comparative method. He briefly refers to the Lord's blessings. But, by selecting other Psalms to drive home his point that the Hebrews were a "lustful and bloodthirsty" tribe, demanding "every earthly good," he either skipped through the Psalter with unforgivable haste, or committed the more grievous error of sacrificing balance to prejudice. The Psalter is undeniably warlike in its imprecations against the enemies of Israel, and, almost from the start, speaks of the Lord as entrusting Israel with the mission to "smash them [the nations] with an iron mace, shatter them like potter's ware." (Psalm 2: 90). David, in the second Book of Samuel, gives thanks in psalm-like mode to God for his victory. He shows himself to be a man of zealous and unmovable conviction in his own righteousness and in the perfidy of

Israel's rivals. The righteousness turns to complaint as God appears not to be present to reward the Hebrews for their devotion. Many of the Psalms reveal the anguish of a people who call on an unanswering, absent, and impassive God to tend to their needs and prayers and acknowledge their sacrifices to glorify him, as they had in the past, for example, in Psalms 10, 13, 14, 16, 22, and 44. As one proceeds through the Psalter, the warlike theme is blunted and slowly replaced by a shift to a struggle between the obedient and the sinners, which occurs as early as Psalm 34; and in Psalm 119, the longest in the Psalter. The Psalmist refers repeatedly to his obedience to the Lord's laws, rules, commandments, precepts, and decrees. In Psalm 148, we see that "kings and peoples of the earth/all princes of the earth and its judges/youths and maidens alike/old and young together" are asked to praise the Lord, and only then does the Psalmist speak of the Lord's exaltation of Israel, "the people closest to Him." No hard distinction is made in this passage between Israel and the nations.

Voltaire is not sympathetic. He is not interested in seeking a fuller interpretation. He is content to say, in summing up the Psalter, that the Jews detested all the nations and were detested by them. We have, he said, sometimes been as cruel as the Jews. But living under a holy law and with the aid of divine prayers, we did not shed our brothers' blood and ravage the earth in the name of a God of mercy (*OCM*, 11, 128–30). These are strange words from a deist with no patience for such pieties—perhaps this was a lapse, perhaps a slip into irony. Earlier, he had invoked Newton, who was still being accused, alongside other "great irreligious men" of genius, of not being a true Christian (*OCM*, 11, 112–16). No figure he could have chosen exemplified so well Voltaire's intellectual allegiance. The appeal to Newtonian mechanics—to scientific authority—as a weapon against the Church is intended as a *coup de grace* to the Bible's claim to absolute authority. It must be denied just as its claim to represent universal history must be resisted. Science and deism still left crucial questions in limbo. The clockmaker God remained inscrutable, and Providence, which was its name, could not be the same as the capricious Hebrew God, though it might appear to be so. Belief in Providence was the sole weapon humankind possessed against the opposite notion of randomness. A philosophy of chance gives the edge both to atheism and to the notion of grace, which Voltaire condemned as ridiculous ("Grâce," *OC*, 36, 183). One could not choose to believe in the necessity of some, and at the same time to believe in the non-necessity of other, events ("Destin," *OC*, 36, 17). For rational beings, there had to be, even if they could not know it fully, a connection between what we do and what happens to us. The good man who believes in God does not belong to any sect. He is most concerned with justice, he wishes to do good; he supports the poor and he defends the oppressed ("Théiste," *OC*, 36, 547–48). True, he said, religion is written in the great book of nature, inscribed by the hand of God (*OC*, 62, 350). Everything occurring in nature is uniform, immutable, and the work of the Creator who created its laws ("Fin, Causes finales," *OC*, 36, 118). The

idea of Providence presented difficulties, Voltaire admitted—he did not explore them systematically—but these do not amount, he says, to disproof ("Théiste," *OC*, 36, 546).[38]

Once such an intellectual shift took place, in which the former bases of authority could be questioned, the rich intellectual heritage of the past, wherever it was found in the world, could no longer be ignored. Among the cultures he chose as examples, China looms large as it did for a growing audience in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, not least for Europe's intellectuals who had to face the troubling problem of reconciling biblical and Chinese chronology, but as well the question of Western and Chinese similarities and differences on the question of creationism and divine providence. In fact, China had a history spread over more than forty centuries and developed, he implied, independently of the West ("De la Chine," *OC*, 35, 543–44). In turning to China, Voltaire had a double goal—to advance the true nature of a universal history without borders, and to argue that any culture without enlightened forms of religion—he meant, of course, natural not revealed religion—was inferior and a danger to humanity. Popular misconceptions of the Chinese attributed to their ancient civilization a common belief in atheism. He painted an almost idyllic picture of Chinese culture. Differing from Bayle, who, he said, believed that China was a land of atheists, he retorted that nothing was further from the truth. True, the Chinese do not believe in eternal punishments and rewards, but neither did the Sadducee Jewish sect nor the Pentateuch speak of an afterlife in their laws. Europeans spread unfounded stories about Chinese religious beliefs, because Chinese metaphysics differed from theirs. They ought to have instead admired China's condemnation of pagan superstitions, and, as well, their criticisms of prevailing Christian morals. Educated Chinese gave short shrift to fables and never defiled their religion with quarrels and civil wars. Popular religion was another matter. It was perpetuated by monks, who tolerated it as being good for the masses. Confucius, however, took exception to this, and, as a sage—he never pretended to be a prophet—his morality was as pure, as severe and as humane as that of Epictetus. Among the elite, materialism was not lacking, but it did not affect their morals and their belief in a supreme being. The Jesuits were right about the reasons for the charges of atheism leveled against the Chinese by their opponents who were jealous of the favor shown their order by the government. Atheism was in fact a rarity in China and was an error to be avoided everywhere to ensure wise government (*OCM*, 11, 176–80). If the Chinese have lost their lead in the sciences and reached a low point in their history, as Europeans did in the medieval period, the reasons are the same as they have always been—a "superstitious respect" for antiquity, blocking the way to the fullest expression of the human mind (*OCM*, 11, 185). Contemporary superstition persists, giving credence to a communal solipsism that "we have invented everything, everything we have comes from the Jews and from ourselves, who have followed the Jews; one is truly undeceived when one searches a bit

through antiquity [nous avons tout inventé, que tout est venu des Juifs et de nous, qui nous avons succédé aux Juifs; on est bien détrompé quand on fouille un peu dans l'antiquité]" (*OCM*, 11, 199).

It is not their allegedly divine history that Voltaire cares about. Our loyalty must be to history, he declares. John's disciples, at first establishing themselves in the lands neighboring Jerusalem, were next to be found in Alexandria where they borrowed from the Platonic philosophers who lived there, and where many Jews were also domiciled. Without a pause, Voltaire considers Rome next, where the early Christians were often confused with Jews, because they followed the same dietary laws, spoke the same language and were often circumcised. These Christians were themselves divided into various sects, but the Jews considered them all as their enemies. Though small in number, Jews were shipped off to Sardinia to colonize the island and to free Rome from their usurious practices. Still, their religious rituals and legal systems were undisturbed. All the same, the Romans regarded them in much the same way as Negroes were seen in his own day, "as a species of inferior men," Voltaire states, referring to contemporary "racial" prejudice, ("comme une espèce d'hommes inférieures"). In turn, Jews directed their fury and hatred against Jewish Christians, accusing them of setting fire to Rome. While neither Nero, nor the Jews and Christians had any interest in lighting the torch, a vengeful populace was given its Christian victims. Voltaire appears to be historically even-handed: Christians were sacrificed on the basis of their supposed, not real, beliefs, because the Romans, confused them "with Judaism, protected by the laws as much as they were despised [avec le judaïsme, protégé par les lois autant que méprisé]." It is hard not to think that he could not resist the jab at a people who somehow managed to be on the right side of the law while being despised for it (*OCM*, 11, 223–24).

His contempt for biblical Jews is nowhere more clearly seen than in his praise of the Arabs. Conquering, yet generous in welcoming converts, enthusiastic and courageous, they stood in sharp contrast to the puny efforts of the Hebrews, cowed by their neighbors, refusing to reach out to and incorporating them into a larger entity. The strength of his admiration for the Arabs and his disdain for and disparagement of the Jews is unambiguous. Of all the conquerors and legislators, there is no one whose life was written about with greater authenticity by his contemporaries than Mahomet. He was intent on eradicating Sabism, an ancient form of worship in Asia and the Middle East of fire, the sun, and stars. Judaism, "detested by all nations," and Christianity, whose abuses by its various sects neighboring his country, he would not tolerate. Like all enthusiasts, struck by the powers of his ideas, he spread them about in good faith, strengthened them by calling on his dreams, and deceived himself by deceiving others, and finally, through treachery, forged a doctrine he believed to be good. He was admittedly ignorant, but very wise for his nation and time. Think of his medical aphorisms, his reform of the Arab calendar, his poetic gifts (*OC*, 11, 203–7). Only the minutest gesture, as he lists Arab virtues, saves his remarks from being a total censure of the Jews:

> [W]hy is it that Mahomet and his successors, who began their conquests exactly like the Jews achieved such great things, and that the Jews did so little? Wasn't it because the Mussulmen took special care, either by force or persuasion, to subject the vanquished to their religion? On the contrary, the Jews never admitted strangers to partake of their rites. The Arabian Mussulmen incorporated other nations; the Jews always kept themselves a distinct people. It appears in short that the courage of the Arabians was more enthusiastic, and their conduct more generous and bold. The Jews held all other nations in abhorrence, and were always afraid of being enslaved: by contrast the Arabs wanted to bring all nations under them, and looked upon themselves as born to command.
>
> If these Ismaelites resembled the Jews in their enthusiasm and thirst for pillage, their courage was prodigiously superior—superior, too, in greatness of soul, and in their magnanimity: their history in the time before Mahomet, whether true or made up, is full of examples of friendship such as those invented in the fables of Pylades and Orestes, of Theseus and Pirithoüs. The history of the Barmecides is only a succession of extraordinary generosity that elevates the soul. These traits form the character of a people. On the other hand, one does not find a single generous action in the annals of the Hebrew people. They knew neither hospitality, liberality nor clemency. Their supreme happiness is to practice usury upon foreigners; and this spirit of usury, the origin of all meanness, is so rooted in their hearts, that it is the continuous theme of the figures of speech employed in the kind of eloquence that is their own. Their glory was to put to fire and sword the little towns which they seized. They murdered old men and children. They spared only the young women. They murdered their masters when they were slaves; they knew no mercy when they were conquerors; they are enemies of the human race. No civility, no science, no art has been perfected at any time by this atrocious people. But from the second century of the Hegira, the Arabs become the preceptors of Europe in the sciences and arts, although their law may seem the enemy of the latter.
>
> (*OCM*, 11, 208–9)[39]

His historic sense returned briefly in his comments on Palestine under the Turks. A tiny strip of territory, it was arid and barren, but might have been cultivated by the Jews who possessed vineyards in the past. Pasturage was difficult, and animals were inadequately nourished. It was a country whose condition the Jews tried to improve with great difficulty, but it was all the same "a delightful land compared with the deserts of Sinai. [une terre délicieuse en comparison des désertes de Sina]." Just as the Swiss, driven from a hostile terrain, went abroad to serve in foreign armies, Jews sought employment as "courtiers" in Africa and Asia. Jews in the world of commerce were hardly to be found in Jerusalem, but they were in Alexandria. There was no doubt, Voltaire added, casting his eye forward, that at no time

in the past had Jews lived so opulently as they now were living in Amsterdam, The Hague, London, and Constantinople (*OCM*, 11, 438–39).

The First Crusade was a time of horror for Jews. Hordes of adventurers, numbering 200,000, made up of women, priests, peasants, and scholars—all believing in their mission to defend Jesus Christ—indulged in an orgy of killing, exterminating:

> all the Jews that they met. There were many of them on the French frontiers, where commerce was totally in their hands. The Christians, believing they were avenging God, carried off all these unfortunates. Never since the time of Adrian had there been such a great massacre of this nation; their throats were cut in Verdun, Spire, Worms, Cologne and Mainz; and several took their own lives after slitting open their wives' stomachs to prevent them from falling into the hands of these barbarians.
>
> (*OCM*, 11, 442)[40]

As if anxious to leave the Jews to their fate, Voltaire remainders them in scattered bits and pieces throughout the rest of the *Essai*, stressing above all their usurious practices, but he notes that they were not alone in driving up the cost of borrowing. From the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, along with the Florentines and Lombards who traded in France and England, whom the Jews served, an annual rate of twenty per cent was exacted, which had the effect of impoverishing the general population. "High interest on money is an infallible sign of public poverty [Le haut intérét de l'argent est la marque infaillible de la pauvreté publique]" (*OCM*, 12, 56). Moving to Spain in the fifteenth century, the edge of his scorn is not as sharp, as he describes a heterogeneous population of ancient Visigoths, Vandals, Africans, aboriginals, and Jews devastating the country in an endless struggle for land. Spain had been truly fertile only under Muslim domination. Conquered, the Moors now labored under their new masters; Spanish Christians worked not at all. Their manufactures were null; their trade negligible; their way of life primitive. Commerce, both internal and external, was in the hands of Jews, who were indispensable in a warrior nation. They then became natural victims, blamed for the causes of Spanish misery. In the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, there were more than 150,000 "men from this peculiar nation, both so odious and so necessary. A great many lords who had nothing but their titles allied themselves with Jewish families, and, through these marriages, made good the costs of their extravagances [hommes de cette nation étrangère si odieuse et si nécessaire. Beaucoup de grands seigneurs, auxquels il ne restait que des titres, s'alliaient à des familles juives, et réparaient par ces mariages ce que leur prodigalité leur avait coûté]." Forced from their property, and then, forced to sell what remained, and finally forbidden to take their money out of the country, 30,000 families fled to Africa, Portugal, and France. They had been wel-

comed, Voltaire says, because of their wealth; and, because of their wealth, they were expelled and stripped of it. The Banyans (also known as Banya or Banyia) and the Gujerati, the trading class in India, practicing a religion as ancient and as exclusive, were never treated this way. They were, in fact, made welcome. By contrast, "The Jews alone are held in horror by all the people among whom they are admitted. [[L]es Juifs seuls sont en horreur à tous les peoples chez lesquels ils sont admis]." Why? A few Spaniards feared what they believed to be their growing power, but the truth was that they were the least warlike of peoples. As well, it was claimed that they posed a threat, because of their presence along the southern coast of Spain, settling there before the Christian era. They had been in Andalusia, Voltaire says, since time immemorial, but they had created an enormous fiction—a mixture of truths and falsehoods—about their origins. This was a people, "among whom those of good sense apply themselves only to commerce and where rabbinism is left to those who can do no better [chez qui les gens de bon sens ne s'appliquent qu'au négoce, et où le rabbinisme est abandonné à ceux qui ne peuvent mieux faire]." At all times, Jews disfigured the truth by inventing absurd fables: "They give themselves false medals and false inscriptions. This kind of deceitfulness, together with other more essential ones for which they are blamed contributes not a little to why they are held in disgrace. [[I]ls mirent en oeuvre de fausses médailles, de fausses inscriptions. Cette espèce de fourberie, jointe aux autres plus essentielles qu'on leur reprochait, ne contribua pas peu à leur disgrâce]" (*OCM*, 12, 159–60).[41] What these more fundamental Jewish features were Voltaire does not say; Jewish deceit and treachery were all too transparent and needed no explanation.

Apart from a brief excursion to Abyssinia whose peoples, he stated, were half-Christian and half-Jewish and practiced rituals common to both (*OCM*, 12, 374), Voltaire quickly passes over the communities of Jews in feudal Europe. Jews were under the domain of suzerain rulers and local lords, and treated, along with villeins and horses, as their property. Suffering under legal disabilities that were imposed either legally or by custom, they lived in a state akin to slavery, forced to wear badges of shame to mark them off from Christians. They were periodically accused of child murder or adultery with Christians, and were hung for these crimes. After 1394 when they were expelled from France, they were not allowed to live in Paris, but were permitted to establish synagogues in Metz and Bordeaux. They were usurers wherever they lived, "according to their privileges and blessings of their law [selon le privilège et la benediction de leur lois]." Their Rabbis, Maimonides among them, spoke favorably about Christianity because of its Jewish roots. "In return, they were pillaged and hunted down, or hung between two dogs; in Spain and Portugal it became a custom to burn them. [On leur répondait en les pillant, en les chassant, ou en les faisant pendre entre deux chiens; on prit en Espagne et en Portugal l'usage de les brûler]" (*OCM*, 12, 162–63). Voltaire did not regard Maimonides as a philosopher,

in contrast to the fairly detailed attention he was given, along with others, in the article on Jewish philosophy in the *Encyclopédie*.[42]

But those times were past, as Jews found improved conditions in Holland and England, France, and Venice, and even in Turkey where Jews controlled commerce. Again, he is quick to say why they are so scorned and detested:

> This was the inevitable consequence of their laws; it was either necessary for them to subjugate everyone or to be crushed. ... When their eyes were opened a little, and the victories of other nations had taught them that the world was bigger than they thought, they became, in obedience to their laws, the natural enemies of these nations and of the whole human race. Their absurd polity persisted even when it should have changed: their superstitions grew with their misfortunes. Their conquerors were merely the uncircumcised ... They preserved all their customs, which are the antithesis of sociability; they were thus justly regarded as a nation opposed to all others; serving them from avarice, they detested them from fanaticism, and made usury a sacred duty. And they are our fathers!
>
> (*OCM*, 12, 164)[43]

> Perhaps the same catastrophe [as had fallen upon the Egyptian priests when the Romans had abandoned them to troops of thieves] will befall the Jews: when human society has reached perfection, when each people conducts its own commerce and no longer shares the fruits of its labor with these rootless brokers, the number of Jews will necessarily diminish. The rich among them are beginning to despise their superstitions; these will be no more than the portion of a people without arts or laws, who, no longer able to grow rich through our negligence, will no longer be able to form a separate society, and forgetting even their ancient and corrupted jargon—a medley of Hebrew and Syriac—even ignorant of their books, will be indistinguishable from the dregs of other peoples.
>
> (*OCM*, 12, 166)[44]

They deserved their fate, it appears from Voltaire's account. Instead of being open and welcoming, they turned stubbornly inward. In an age of gathering sociability, which, we recall, is the animating spirit of Voltaire's proto-anthropologic and historic search for the sources ranged against civilizing influences in large portions of the world, but principally in Europe, Jews, as the original offenders, stood in the way of reason and progress, just as the Church, acting as a surrogate for the Jews, kept back the light. The circularity of his argument, however, undercuts its thrust. Describing them consistently as a puny nation, without intellectual weight, as a people with a slavish mentality, slavish, because Voltaire strongly suggests, their belief in an omnipotent, ferocious, cruel, vengeful, and jealous God placed them in a state of bondage that narrowed and restricted their

view of the world. It was not slavishness that Spinoza, we might recall, singled out as the fundamental characteristic of Judaism, but its discouragement of manliness, which might be taken for the same thing, but it has also been interpreted as "trust in God instead of trust in one's own power."[45] But Spinoza did not think that such would always be the case, "such is the mutability of human affairs" (*TTP*, p. 100). The Old Testament is, as he knew, hardly bereft of rebellious voices rising against cosmic indifference. Voltaire, by contrast, denied mutability to the Jews. Post-biblical Jews, he added, were parasitic on the larger community and lacked generosity of spirit, a further extension of their "slavish mentality."[46]

On the question of sin, Judaism, in Voltaire's eyes, clearly places responsibility on God's creatures. If there is no justice, it is not the fault of God; submission to God is a source of strength. Voltaire, of course, made a virtue of exposing human weakness but found its source in human incredulity, originating in a primitive sense of sin and idolatry. "If we observe all the evil which results from false zeal," he said, "then we see that men have for long carried with them their own Hell on earth" (*TT*, p. 48). He could not imagine that Judaism's strength lay in its belief system. For him it was its fatal flaw. At the same time, he curiously endowed Jews with another kind of power that they, he quickly conceded, did not in fact possess. Their power, such as it was, rested, he said, on their skill in trade and finance, but it was also the source of their weakness, rendering them vulnerable and impotent, as victims of popular fury and state action. Just as infuriating to Voltaire was the relative ease with which the religion of this destructive people should have become so generally accepted, how, in other words, the particular had become universal. These were not paradoxes; they had taken on, in his view, the adamantine quality of facts. Inexplicable was another curiosity, prejudice, which truly has the mark of paradox: "We hold the Jews in horror, and yet we would like to think that all that they have written and that we have collected bears the mark of Divinity. Never has there been so palpable a contradiction. [Nous avons les Juifs en horreur, et nous voulons que tout ce qui a été écrit par eux et recueilli par nous, porte l'empreinte de la Divinité. Il n'y a jamais eu de contradiction si palpable]" ("Salomon," *OC*, 36, 517).

# 4 Voltaire's Jews in the world of commerce and their capacity for critical thought and social inclusion

That the Jews were caught in a kind of time capsule—the notion that their past was their present and their present was their past—and that they should best be seen synchronically, and, inversely, that it was only in the Old Testament that they could be seen diachronically, was a problem for Voltaire. The test of empirical experience could not be wholly ignored. Jews were palpably not the same through time. History, even if, as he believed, Jews refused to acknowledge time outside of its biblical setting, had changed them. As we have seen in the *Essai sur les moeurs*, there are instances of his treatment of Jewish life in Asia Minor, in Europe from the Hellenistic to the Roman periods and thence to the early centuries of the Christian era and forward to the feudal ages and early modern periods of their ongoing dispersal, in which he does not set them in an unchanging timeframe. Given the abundance of Voltaire's references to Jewish money trading, it is a question of some importance to see how he fitted them into his treatment of how he saw early modern economic life in his concept of a universal history. It was part of his grand scheme in the *Essai* to mark those transition points that were critical in the slow and gradual, yet momentous, movement away from the closed worlds of discrete units of social and political organization to the larger world of distant commerce, which had the effect of rearranging local loyalties and challenging traditional belief. Under the power of nation- and empire-builders from Charles V to Suleiman the Great from west to east, and to the north in France, England, and Germany, to the south in Africa, and to far-off Asia, the politics of half the world was being radically altered. More important was the expansion of Europe to North and South America. It was an illustrious, economically expansive century, despite religious conflicts, during which the arts in Italy flourished and radiated their splendors to almost every part of Europe where manners were softened. It was a time of growing opulence. Following the loss of Constantinople, Europe ironically gained control of international trade in the Indies and the Levant. Industry took off, creating *grand entrepôts* of trade in Marseilles, the cities of the Netherlands, London, Venice, Augsburg, and Nuremberg (*OCM*, 12, 217–19). In the sixteenth century, the theater arts reached a high level, reflecting the newfound wealth pouring in from the East and

the West. The genius of Shakespeare "burst through in the midst of barbarism, as did Lope de Vega in Spain. [perça au milieu de la barbarie, comme Lope de Vega en Espagne]." But it was a pity that there was more barbarism than genius in Shakespeare's plays. Himself a master of theater, Voltaire described it in the loftiest terms as an art "that gathers citizens together, softens manners, and is conducive to morals through pleasurable means [qui rassemble les citoyens, adoucit les moeurs, et conduit à la morale par le plaisir]" (*OCM*, 12, 246). Progress in the sciences meant the rebirth of true philosophy. Galileo made the language of truth and reason speak to physics, but he paid for his breakthrough: only the arts made true progress.

Voltaire momentarily took up the theme of the Jews as the "brokers of commerce" in a brief account of their fate following the Spanish expulsions. Commerce, he said, could only subsist when men's minds are spared turmoil. The Papacy had, according to Voltaire, authorized the residence of more than 20,000 Jews in Italy, though its tolerance erred on the side of restrictions, which were imposed arbitrarily and in response to complaints from non-Jewish bankers. More important was the Italian Sephardic presence in maritime trade. In Poland, far to the East, there were more than 280 synagogues; Holland alone counted 12,000 Jews, proving, against all the evidence, that it could not carry out its commercial relations without them.[1] No more dangerous than elsewhere, the Jews, but for their persecutions, would have assured the Spanish government with an expanded tax base (*OCM*, 12, 350). By contrast with Sephardic success in Europe, Morocco, Tetuan, and Mequinez were other destinations where Jews, fleeing Spain after 1492, he said, lived in abject poverty (*OCM*, 12, 456).

The seventeenth century saw further expansion. Nowhere was it more impressive, Voltaire said, than in Holland, which surpassed England principally because of its international commerce in which its traders, driven to survive outside a tiny land base, excelled in distant parts of the world, using its riches to defend itself against the Spaniards, while fighting for its liberty. Amsterdam became the center of world trade. Despite internal religious disputes, it warred successfully in America against Spain, established a firm foothold in the East Indies, and proved a formidable rival to the English:

> It lives on commerce alone . . . and so is more alike the ancient republic of Tyre, which was powerful because of its sole reliance on commerce, than it is to Carthage, which had so many possessions in Africa, or to Venice which was far too spread out on terra firma. [[E]lle subsiste par le seul commerce . . . en cela plus semblable à l'ancienne république de Tyr, puissant par le seul commerce, qu'à celle de Carthage, qui eut tant de possessions en Afrique et à celle de Venise, qui s'était trop étendue dans la terre ferme.]
>
> (*OCM*, 13, 116–22, quotation from 121–22)

That the Jewish and crypto-Jewish exiles contributed so vitally to the expansion of trade in Holland and were linked together in a commercial European and non-European network was a fact that he minimized. Isaac de Pinto, the Dutch Jewish economist, was Chairman of the Board of the Amsterdam Synagogue, and well known as Director of the Dutch West India Co. He had, as we shall see, a brief correspondence in the 1760s with Voltaire. He gave Jews pride of place in international commerce:

> If a Spanish or Portuguese Jew, settled at Constantinople or Amsterdam, should affirm, that the unjust expulsion of the people of his religion out of Spain had done great mischief to that kingdom as well as to Portugal, he certainly would have reason on his side. The Jews in Spain and Portugal were a very innocent set of people, quiet subjects, and useful citizens to the state. They were very numerous, and kept industry and commerce alive. Many of them were men of learning, and much respected. . . . Our Jew might add, with strict truth, that the expulsion of these people contributed to depopulate Spain and Portugal.[2]

Voltaire curiously makes no mention of Dutch and Flemish art; no mention of Spinoza either; nor of the advances in the sciences in the Netherlands. Note is, however, taken of the natural sciences in Central Europe where, a century before, Copernicus, Tycho Brahe and Kepler were at the forefront. The sciences made headway in England with the founding of the Royal Society and the pioneering work of Newton. He summed up a thousand years of history almost in a state of euphoria, notwithstanding his more sober moments of guarded doubt. The miseries of the past were being left behind, and the flourishing condition of Europe was proving that human industry was prevailing and rising above violence. "When a nation has knowledge of the arts, when it is not in any way the subject of foreigners, it rises easily from its ruins and restores itself as ever. [Quand une nation connaît les arts, quand elle n'est point subjuguée par les étrangers, elle sort aisément de ses ruines, et se rétablit toujours]" (*OCM*, 13, 184).

How are Voltaire's constant and censorious remarks on Jewish usury to be regarded in a narrative of commercial change from which Jews drop out of sight in his survey of the seventeenth and the following century? Jewish economic activity was not insignificant in Alsace, for example, where on the eve of the Revolution Jews owned one-third of the mortgages.[3] As late as 1773, Voltaire told Jean Baptiste Nicolas de Lisle de Sales that Jews in the British colonies were there to make money, in the same way as the Armenians, Banyans, and Guèbres (Mazdeists in Persia) did in all parts of Asia. Whatever they say about their biblical origins when Jews sell old clothes to the savages, "they are, nonetheless the greatest rogues who have ever sullied the face of the globe." (*OC*, 124, D18687, Voltaire to de Lisle de Sales, December 15, 1773, 226–28). Here, as in the *Essai sur les moeurs*, where he compares Jews with the Hindu money lenders, the comparison is not meant

to put them on the same footing, but to make Jewish practices worse.[4] It was in Alsace in 1777 and 1778, the year of Voltaire's death, that public opinion appeared to rally in support of François Hell in spite of his scandalous pamphlet in which he claimed that he was justified in forging receipts supposedly issued by Jewish moneylenders in repayment of their debts. He did so on the grounds that Jewish greed and hatred demanded exposure.[5] The image of the Jew as usurer had been deeply entrenched in the public consciousness for centuries. It resurfaced as an important point in the debate during the Revolution on how Jews might become accepted as citizens, in which most notably Mirabeau and the abbé Grégoire took part. As early as 1781, an influential pamphlet, *On the Civil Improvement of the Jews*, the work of Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, the Prussian minister, freemason and friend to Mendelssohn, was translated into French and prefigured the parameters of the debate. He predicted the appearance of a new Jew, an Enlightenment Jew, keeping his religion to himself, giving up his "shady" financial dealings, and prepared, like other men, to work hard at physical labor, and thus earn his right to be considered eligible for public office.[6] As a servant of the Prussian monarchy, he viewed the amelioration of the Jews in the context of how they might best serve the state. Though on friendly terms, Mendelssohn took exception to Dohm's belief that some degree of independence should be left to the Jewish community, arguing that tolerance need not be achieved at the expense of granting a distinct status to them, and, indeed would be a backward step.

Voltaire's public writings do not register the change in, nor does he offer any fresh thoughts about, the commercial status of the Jews. Montesquieu, by contrast, not only saw how important they were, but also revealed how well he understood the intricacies of modern commerce—a fact from which Voltaire was inclined to demur, when he wrote that Montesquieu, in *The Spirit of the Laws*:

> had no knowledge of the political principles pertaining to wealth, manufacturing, finance, and commerce. These principles had not yet been discovered. It would have been as impossible for him to produce Smith's treatise on wealth as it would have been for him to discover Newton's mathematical principles.[7]

This might be taken as an example, Catherine Larrère writes, of Voltaire's "méchanceté envieuse," but she adds that Adam Smith was the real pathbreaker. Nevertheless, when we broach the question of how each approached the role of the Jews in commerce, it is Montesquieu who offered a much milder, if not a generous, criticism of Jewish usurious practices, commenting that "commerce, which was the profession only of mean people, also became that of dishonest people; for whenever one prohibits a thing that is naturally permitted or necessary, one only makes dishonest the people who do it."[8] He also drew attention to "[t]he law of Mohammed [that] confuses usury with the loan at

interest."[9] The distinction, as we shall presently see, is recognized in the article on interest in the *Encyclopédie*. Again, unlike Montesquieu who credited the Jews with the momentous invention of letters of exchange, and in that way enabled commerce "to avoid violence and maintain itself everywhere,"[10] Voltaire was content in parts of the *Essai* to concentrate on Jewish usury, while, in others in which he enriched his narrative of the growing wealth of Europe and its interconnectedness with the world outside it, he no longer pursued the usury charges. There is no concrete evidence, but it is not likely that Voltaire was not aware of Isaac de Pinto's, explanation for the distinction in the Old Testament between interest (*nesseg*) and usury (*tarbit*). De Pinto, in fact, rebuked him for spreading "false and scandalous" charges.[11] Just as significantly, Voltaire failed to acknowledge Jewish innovations in the distant past (such as the letters of exchange), nor did he pay sufficient attention to the importance of Jewish commerce in the modern world. In Montesquieu's extensive analysis of how commerce reduced prejudice and "spread knowledge of the mores of all nations everywhere," allowing them to be "compared to each other," resulting "in good things,"[12] we may see an anticipation of Voltaire's comparative treatment of past and present societies, in which he posited the close connection between commerce and moral improvement.

By the time Voltaire summed up economic developments to the mid-point of the eighteenth century, it was clear to him that much had changed in two centuries, but economic conflicts between states had not; they had only become more intense and widespread. The more powerful a nation became, the more it diluted strong feeling, for it is impossible to show affection for strangers whom one scarcely knows. The wish to aggrandize one's own country necessarily meant bringing misfortune to one's neighbors. Anyone who would be indifferent to the question of his country's greatness, whether it be wealthy or poor, would be, Voltaire said with a fair degree of acuity, a universal citizen ("Patrie," *OC*, 36, 411–15), a question that will be explored more fully in Part II. The likelihood of a world without human folly was far from becoming a reality. Paradoxically, while prosperity rested on "gentle" commerce and was the foundation for an improvement in *moeurs* and morality, war among competing commercial states remained a major threat to prosperity. War consumed wealth; it enriched a few; it impoverished many; it put a damper on the circulation of money in the national economy as it flowed out to seek more profitable returns. "Well! Let's not go to war, and let's not get ourselves killed on the off-chance for the sake of money."[13] To be sure, the state, given the condition of international rivalry, that uses its taxes to defend life in wartime and resolutely resists providing "the comforts of life," is the richer for it.[14] So, how were states and commercial interests to escape from such a serious, perhaps, crippling quandary? Voltaire looked to the state. The good or evil consequences of war were above all a question of sound financial management. No state should increase the flow of credit without ensuring adequate supplies of capital. State finances are most in danger of neglecting this principle when the state is at war, as happened

during Louis XIV's reign when France, like England, became a debtor to its *rentiers* through the purchase of offices (*OCM*, 13, 92–93). Yet, while finance at the end of the seventeenth century was still a science of guesswork, it was gradually becoming less conjectural. Debt could be managed efficiently without consuming the nation's wealth if the economy continued to flourish and a system of paper credit acceptable to all parts of the economy was established. In this regard, England managed its finances best and was worthy of emulation. He lauded the governments of England, Holland, and Venice for supporting their state banks, and hoped that reason would soon prevail in France (Cf. "Banque" in the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, *OCM*, 17, 533–37). He made the same recommendations in *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* (*OCM*, 14, 529). Indeed, John Law had, earlier in the eighteenth century, established a system of credit notes in France, leaving behind considerable chaos, yet, from the disaster, the East India Company survived with even greater strength and was, through its commercial networks, making France great. Law's system if "kept within appropriate limits, might indeed have been more good than bad."[15] Curiously, although de Pinto argued in 1771 that the British national debt had indeed increased British wealth, the aging *philosophe* left no trace of having either any interest in, or been aware of, such an analysis.[16]

The mercantilist obsession with the accumulation of specie was fortunately a vanishing relic. Money by itself is not the measure of wealth, Voltaire intones. Instead, "[I]t lies in an abundance of commodities of every kind; it lies in manufacturing and work. . . . [I]t's not money that enriches a kingdom; it's intelligence; I mean the intelligence that directs labor." And that intelligence is preeminently the patrimony of the middle class: "the middle class is enlightened" and it instructs "the great who sometimes think, and the small who don't think. It has established itself in the financial world since the time of the famous Colbert," [and] "we must do more than Colbert."[17] It has been noted that Colbert's economic policies prevented Louis XIV's wars from bankrupting France. The French option was to set aside Fénelon's anti-luxury bias and pursue Colbertism more vigorously.[18] Increasingly, luxury (*luxe*) was not viewed as decisively injurious to the individual and society. Voltaire added his voice in its favor, though he had qualms about New World slavery, seeing in its lucrative trade an important foundation for the expansion of "new needs." And if, as in the words of the slave in *Candide* (Chapter 19), Europeans consumed cheap sugar, they did so, Voltaire observes, without making any connection between his mutilation and their desires. In the great scheme of things, the poor would not always remain poor:

> The luxury that comes from abundance and makes riches circulate through all the veins of a state makes a great kingdom flourish. It maintains industry and multiplies the needs of the rich and opulent, thus tying them to the poor and the indigent. Luxury is to a great

> empire what the diastolic and systolic movements of the heart are to the human body. It is the spring that sends the blood through the great arteries to our extremities and makes it circulate through the small veins back to the heart for redistribution.
>
> If it occurred to some incompetent politician to banish luxury from a great state, that state would begin to languish. Money, [thus rendered] useless, would remain in the coffers of the wealthy. Commerce would languish, manufactures would decline for lack of markets, industry would perish, rich families would always remain so, and indigents would have no recourse against their poverty.[19]

De Pinto did not shy away from considering the effects of trans-Atlantic trade, which created, he said, excessive luxury, but then added, striking a Mandevillian note, that while "there is less simplicity, less truth, in each particular society … society in general [is] improved. Is it possible that political virtue should grow from the extension of moral vice?" Yes, he seems to say, for the arts and sciences have progressed with commerce, and "has added new varnish to the politeness of Europe." With wealth has come "liberty and equality that brings the different ranks nearer together, and banishes that slavery and debasement, in which a general poverty, compared with the wealth of a very few individuals, seemed to plunge the people. This perhaps is the greatest benefit derived to Europe from the discovery of America."[20]

Thus, de Pinto and Voltaire were of similar mind. The morality that once condemned riches, equating them with vice, was not the overriding concern, at least, when it came to considering the sources and nature of wealth and how, without its generation and diffusion, which linked rich and poor, society was doomed to a lower state of civilization. There is a hint here of a proto-trickledown effect theory, but Voltaire does not suggest that the poor would be reduced in number, only that without the impetus luxury gave to economic activity, they would fare far worse ("Luxe," *OC*, 36, 326–27). His focus was on the progress of civilization and its economic foundations and far less on poverty, a stubborn problem to be sure, but one that it was thought best to be treated separately. He thought that the poor would continue to exist in all societies, whether rich or poor. He linked Athens' great men in every sphere of life with its wealth, and their absence in Sparta with its poverty. National wealth was due to and depended on greater productivity in all branches of the economy: in industry, agriculture, and in commerce. Yet he still clung to some mercantilist notions, as when he said:

> To be a good patriot is to want one's city to enrich itself by commerce and to be powerful in war. It is clear that one country cannot gain without another losing, and that it cannot conquer without making others victims. Such is the human condition: to wish for one's country's greatness is to wish evil to one's neighbors ("Patrie," *OC*, 36, 415).[21]

Voltaire did not appear to have, or failed to say if he had, any knowledge of de Pinto's *Essai sur le luxe* published in 1762, and so we cannot know how much the tract influenced his views. True, not all was rosy, he added. Excessive tax burdens were borne by the cultivators, one of the chief backbones of the nation's wealth. Again, however, wealth would increase if the burdens were shared proportionately, and if the state removed the internal customs barriers to the free circulation of grain and wine. All in all, France had industriously moved in a hundred years from an economy and society in which the many served only "*les grands*," to one in which the many had found a thousand ways to improve their lives. Indeed, the many constituted an inestimable treasure, whatever methods were used to administer the state's finances (*OCM*, 14, Ch. 30).

Apart from his obsession with Jewish usury, Voltaire's ideas followed much, but not all, of advanced economic thought on both sides of the Channel, for example, the physiocrats' science of political economy, with Turgot taking a prominent role in pressing for, and finally attempting to implement, administrative reform, and Adam Smith's critique of mercantilism, his advocacy of free trade, analysis of the sources of productive labor, and the nature of capital accumulation. Voltaire died two years after the publication of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), which was highly critical of monopolistic trading practices, such as those of the British East India Company. Voltaire did not ask, apart from his critique of slavery in the New World, how the benefits of *luxe* should be weighed against individual greed.[22] In his more generous moods, as we shall see presently, Voltaire did not single out Jews for their financial and trading activities as an identifying mark of shameful, because exploitative, behavior. But, by not paying heed to the changing chronology of the institutions of credit and commerce, the omissions in the *Essai sur les moeurs* mutilate and misrepresent, in part, the past commercial history of the Jews and the changes that were taking place in the world economy and the Jewish part in it during his lifetime. The poorest Jews suffered severe economic disabilities, but the wealthiest enjoyed the "privileges" of a distinct caste that had, over several generations, been granted to them by the state and remained more or less intact until the Revolution, when their economic activities were no longer subject to restrictive regulatory powers. In the seventeenth century, they had importantly furnished provisions to the armies in Alsace and Lorraine and were protected by the authorities. And it was not until the next century that their financial and commercial power was lessened. Nevertheless, Jews, such as the members of the Gradis family in Bordeaux, remained in the shipping business, which, along with other Jewish merchants from that port city, traded triangularly between Europe, the Caribbean, and the North American colonies, and, of course, were participating in the Mediterranean trade, which had begun long centuries before. The volume of goods traded between Bordeaux and the West Indies was in fact the greatest of any port participating in the Atlantic trade. The Jewish merchants

of Bordeaux also developed commercial links with fellow Jews in London, Hamburg, Livorno, and other port cities in Europe. Montesquieu, who confided some of his thoughts on these questions in his *Pensées*, urged the establishment of a territory between France and Spain to allow Jews the privileges of open trading that Jews in Livorno enjoyed.[23] Jews from Holland and Britain were set up in the West Indies, as well as Jews who had been expelled from Portugal and Spain.[24] Jonathan Israel, citing his own work and that of others, noted that the Dutch and the English built "up their western colonial empires, [and] decided, expressly on mercantilist grounds, to make use of Jewish resources, skills, and settlers" in the New World. These studies, he writes:

> extend our knowledge of the Jewish—chiefly Sephardi—role in Brazil, the Guyanas, and the Caribbean, and also our understanding of the Portuguese New Christian crypto-Jewish penetration not only of Brazil and New Spain, but also of other areas, such as Buenos Aires and the River Plate region.[25]

The economic significance of Jews in the port cities also cannot be overestimated, but thus far its proportion in the total value of commerce in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has not been researched. Almost totally dominated by the Sephardim, more interest has been shown in how their economic importance allowed them to wrest privileges from local authorities and to facilitate a path to emancipation and secularization independently of the later steps taken, for example, in France and Germany.[26]

While Voltaire compared the Jewish and non-Jewish usurious practices, it seemed that he was incurious about the extraordinary role Jews played in international commerce. While he referred to Dutch and Spanish commerce, he did not see, or he chose to ignore, the part that Jews had in the expansion of maritime global trade, a point, as we shall soon see, that did not escape the attention of the indefatigable chevalier Louis de Jaucourt, a Protestant who had studied medicine at Leiden, spent some time in Cambridge, and was a member of the Royal Society in London, as well as of the academies of Berlin, Stockholm and Bordeaux.[27] It was during Voltaire's lifetime that Jewish participation in this trade reached its high point, but it began to decline from the middle of the century. For two centuries, Sephardic Jews and crypto-Jews were deeply involved in a complex web of long distance trading transactions that transcended the imperial politics of the day as well as the cultural and religious barriers dividing empire-states. Jonathan Israel who has contributed much to the study of the phenomenon is quick to say that no special attributes of Jews *qua* Jews can be said to account for it. Instead, precise economic conditions were at work on an international scale. Because of their social and community institutions, these circumstances enabled Sephardic Jews and crypto-Jews, to take a leading part in the vast expansion of trading networks covering almost every corner of the globe. The French Sephardic community in Bordeaux

and Bayonne was a large presence in French maritime growth, but a relatively minor player compared with the global reaches of the other imperial states, and it was further limited because there was no large organized Jewish community in the French colonies, unlike the existence of such communities in France's rival colonial empires. In any case, by the middle of the eighteenth century, the Spanish, Venetian, and Dutch empires rapidly declined, and with their decline Sephardic centrality came to an end as well. As Israel puts it, the decline led to the migration of wealthier Sephardim from Amsterdam, Venice, and Livorno, a dispersal mainly to the New World "and towards cultural assimilation, not infrequently culminating in reconversion to Christianity, both Protestant and Catholic, a phenomenon marked in England, Holland and Germany but also to be seen in the eighteenth-century Caribbean."[28]

Voltaire's omissions are not so different from those that were also absent from the *Encyclopédie* where, with some notable exceptions, no specific reference is made to Jews in commerce. A brief glance at the entries shows how commerce, merchants, financiers, and stock traders were discussed. Jaucourt, showing an uncommon knowledge of the subject, writes that Jewish traders were essential in lubricating the wheels of commerce:

> Thus in our own time, (where they are scattered and live) in greater security than they ever had in all of Europe where commerce flourishes, they have become the instruments by means of which the most distant nations can speak and communicate as one. It is due to them, as it is with the pegs and nails that are used in (the construction) of a great building, which are needed to keep all of its parts together, that all the parts of commerce are linked. Spain which drove them out finds itself in a very bad way, and France, too, has done poorly where these subjects whose beliefs differed on a few points from that of the sovereign have been persecuted. The love of the Christian religion resides in its practice, and this practice lives only through gentleness, humanity and charity.[29]

The entry on usury in the *Supplément* to the *Encyclopédie* is even more revealing. While on the one hand, Faiguet de Villeneuve somewhat naïvely recalls the primitive past of the Israelites as a pastoral people who tried to obey laws on lending and borrowing that were meant to protect families and were admonished against exacting excessive rates of interest, he argues against common prejudices that would banish the practice altogether. It is justified so long as it does not harm the poor and is certainly legitimate in the case of lenders and borrowers whose economic situations are roughly the same. It was supported on the supposition that the lender was foregoing the use of his resources once the money left his hands.[30] There are two articles on the institution of interest. The first refers conventionally to the different books of the Old Testament where interest is prohibited by, and

from, members of the Jewish community; the second, referring to contemporary times, complains that profits from finance benefited a small number of individuals, giving them a monopoly in the provision of credit to the state, as well as to private individuals, with the result that costs in general were being driven up, and hence were harmful to the economy. At the same time, a fixed rate of five per cent was recommended to ensure that commercial, agricultural, and industrial resources were not only kept intact but also increased. The article does not refer once to the role of Jews in these transactions.[31] Similarly, without alluding to Jews in an article on finance, which appears to have been printed with at least one excision, Peselier takes Montesquieu to task for maligning the world of finance and pleads for a reversal of attitudes that would finally acknowledge the indispensability of the financier, treat him "decently, equitably, and reasonably," and recognize his contributions to the increase of wealth and well-being in Europe.[32] Montesquieu was, in fact, not so much critical of financiers, as he was of their questionable financial dealings. He cites the record of Samuel Bernard (1651–1739), "or any other banker the state wants to use," and suggests that banking operations could, in similar, and, if repeated, instances, lead to a financial crisis in the event of immoderate outflows to foreign countries, or because of hoarding to protect any expectations of future profits from being siphoned off by the state. Indeed, he faulted bankers for excessive profit-taking.[33]

The entry for *luxe*, written by Jean François de Saint-Lambert, poet and friend to Voltaire, marks what might be a milestone in removing the question from the moralists and placing it at the center of "la douce commerce." Resuming all the arguments against luxury, he dismissed them all, as, for example, the one that linked luxury and immorality in Japan. In the infancy of nations, reason, industry, and knowledge made little progress and life was simple and poor. Nations had advanced since then. France could avoid the pernicious effects of luxury, indeed, benefit from it, if it did not live beyond its means, and if it did not commit the mistakes and avoided the abuses of Louis XIV's reign, especially as it drew to its close when the war of 1709 brought disorder and abuse to the nation's finances. It remained indispensable to progress in the arts, industry, and commerce. Modern governments with constitutional safeguards and laws protective of property will welcome citizens, who by enriching themselves, enrich the nation. The middling sections of the population—the artisans, the men of finance and commerce, all those who wish to better themselves—are the true support of society, not the *grands*, who live in indolence without contributing to society. Care had to be taken to ensure that the interests of all sections of the community shared in the benefits of a society that would elevate and link the virtues of ambition, honor, and patriotism to the passions generated by *luxe*. Patriotic spirit ought to dictate how wealth should be used. It ought not to be subordinated to lowly personal interest. But no agrarian laws, no redistribution of wealth, or violent means could accomplish this

objective. What was needed were policies that would not shower excessive benefits on certain industries and certain kinds of trade. (Saint-Lambert does not name them.) If steps were taken to make finance less lucrative and measures introduced to use the power of shame to punish idleness, there would be no need to attack luxury itself nor the rich. They would ensure the growth of even more wealth that would benefit everyone. A managed, not a regulated economy, seems to be the path that Saint-Lambert advocated. He did not ask how the thin line that divided them might be observed.[34] Though Montsesquieu, like Saint-Lambert and Voltaire, did not indulge in false sentiment in recalling the "popular government" of Greece where the only force needed to sustain it was virtue, whereas "[the political men] of today speak to us only of manufacturing, commerce, finance, wealth, and even luxury,"[35] he cautioned that the price paid for greater harmony among nations could very well lead to the commercialization of all facets of life, the heightening of *amour-propre*, and the destruction of fellow feeling.[36] That, however, was the way of the modern world; nothing could reverse the course of history. He was both hopeful about the survival of civic virtue in small republics—and to that extent his thinking puts him in republicanism's ranks—[37]and less sanguine than Voltaire in counting the costs of commercializing society and the diminution of true regard for one's country. Such regard, however, prompted him to backtrack in *The Spirit of the Laws*, stressing thereby the vast gulf separating commercial from non-commercial nations. Even more markedly, he accepts the overwhelming power of commerce's inner dynamic and seems to swallow his fear that virtue would be sacrificed to money, and, as the following passage shows, to utility:

> It is hard when a country does not have superfluous things, but it is the nature of commerce to make superfluous things useful and useful ones necessary. Therefore, the state will be able to give the necessary things to a greater number of its subjects. Let us say, therefore, that it is not the nations who need nothing that lose by carrying on commerce; it is those who need everything. It is not the peoples who have enough among themselves but those who have nothing at home who find it advantageous to trade with no one.[38]

At the same time as he argued that the great commercial enterprises that traversed the globe received their impetus from risk takers who felt economically secure in republics, he also went to lengths to distinguish between two forms of commerce. In an earlier passage, he showed a preference for an economical commerce, for:

> as it is founded only on the practice of gaining little and even of gaining less than any other nation and of being compensated only by gaining continually, it is scarcely possible for it to be done by a people among

> whom luxury is established who spend much and who see only great objects.

The commerce of luxury, by contrast, serves a nation's "arrogance, its delights, and its fancies."[39] One may fairly conclude with Catherine Larrère that Montesquieu was less intent on laying down foundations for a science of economics than he was in showing how knowledge of commerce, as well as an incipient science of economics, cannot be separated from politics, and how the two inform one another, and, as well, why he believed that forms of government determine the nature of commerce.[40]

Voltaire made no such distinction and had fewer qualms. One searches in vain for references to the frugality and self-denial that Montesquieu deemed the necessary attributes of a virtuous republic, which, of course, were not those of a monarchy in which honor is accorded primacy of place.[41] Voltaire's definition of a republic leaves out virtue completely. He appears to be more insistent on the point and is even more adamant in his critique of equality:

> A republic is not founded on virtue at all; it is founded on the ambition of each citizen, which keeps in check the ambition of all others; on pride which curbs pride; on the wish to dominate which does not allow anyone else to dominate. From all that laws are formed which preserve equality as much as possible. It is a society in which the guests, having an equal appetite, eat at the same table, until a powerful, greedy man comes on the scene who helps himself to everything, leaving them the crumbs.[42]

Equality is not a matter of each looking out for the interests of others, but the reverse. Vice, which is shared by all, holds everyone in check and ensures equality. Vices, it appears, cancel out vices, putting everyone on a level playing field. The difficulty, however, is that when power and greed enter the picture, the equilibrium is disturbed. The ambition and pride of the stronger will apparently be overwhelming; equality lasts only so long as everyone is content. Thus, a place at the table must be assigned to mutual self-denial. On this logic, Voltaire's equality model thus falls apart. Indeed, he offers no explanation for the appearance of power and greed. They step in unannounced. Nor does he consider the possibility of a restoration of a diminished form of equality as when, faced by power and greed, the eaters of crumbs might join together in protest. Thus, he offers no satisfactory account for the sources of despotism lurking in the depths of commercial operations, while Montesquieu makes the effort, especially in his critique of what he believed to be the way in which John Law's financial policies laid the ground for despotism.[43]

On the question of slavery, like Voltaire who, however, accepted it uneasily as a foundation for the continued expansion of commerce, Montesquieu was

scathing in his disapproval. No government, monarchic, aristocratic or democratic, can countenance it. A monarchic government cannot, he said, tolerate the debasement of human nature. Likewise, the existence of slavery fatally undermines the spirit of the constitutions of democratic and aristocratic governments, and "serve[s] only to give citizens a power and a luxury they should not have."[44] Voltaire, it should be recalled, also distinguished between Spartan poverty and Athenian splendor, contrasting the impoverished state of the arts in the former, and praising their magnificence in the latter, but the question of slavery in classical times did not elicit much analysis from either Voltaire or Montesquieu.

If, however, as his *Essai sur les moeurs* demonstrates abundantly, Voltaire looked away from the past to the future, and considered how Jews could or could not claim to be included as part of it, we have another indication of his capacity for reimagining them. There are two sides to the future he envisioned. One was economic; the other political; the two for him were dependent on one another, fused in such a way that the one made the other possible. The expansion of free commerce would open the world to an exchange of products, enhance its wealth and expand freedom (Voltaire, *Diatribe a l'auteur des Ephémérides*, *OCM*, 29, 359–70). His admiration of English mercantile life was in sharp contrast to his critique of a traditional aristocracy, deriving its wealth, social prestige, and diminishing political power from the land. "Yet I don't know," he wrote, "which is the more useful to a state, a well-powdered lord … who gives himself airs of grandeur … or a great merchant who enriches his country, sends orders from his office to Surat and to Cairo, and contributes to the well-being of the world." Moreover, and very important, was the fact that, "The commerce which has brought wealth to the citizenry of England, has helped to make them free, and freedom has developed commerce in its turn. By means of it the nation has grown great."[45] He had the same praise for Holland and Venice, where, he declared:

> toleration is the fruit of liberty, and the origin of happiness and abundance … [W]here there is not liberty of conscience there is seldom liberty of trade, the same tyranny encroaching upon the commerce as upon Religion. In Commonwealths and other free countrys (sic) one may see in a see (sic) port, as many religions as shipps (sic)" (Notebooks, *OC*, 43, 126, Voltaire wrote this in English).

Spinoza, a century earlier, heaped praise on Amsterdam:

> which enjoys the fruits of … freedom, to its own considerable prosperity and the admiration of the world … [in which] men of every race and sect live in complete harmony; and before entrusting their property to some person they will want to know no more than this, whether he is rich or poor and whether he has been honest or dishonest in his

> dealings. As for religion or sect, that is of no account . . . and no sect whatever is so hated that its adherents are denied the protection of the civil authorities.
>
> (*TTP*, Ch. 20, p. 298)

A century later, we find in an entry under "courtiers" in the *Encyclopédi*e that, in Amsterdam, the *courtiers jurés*, traders in the Stock Exchange who took an oath administered by the burgomasters, numbered 395 of whom only 20 were Jews, while the *courtiers ambulans*, who were not authorized, and presumably not required to take such an oath, numbered almost 1000, but no breakdown of this figure is given and we cannot know how many were Jews.[46] As if paraphrasing Spinoza, Voltaire wrote enthusiastically about the London Stock Exchange, but his purpose is different, as one can see immediately. Spinoza gives an example of a city that brings together people who espouse different religions; he is at pains to show that civil peace ensured by authority not only trumps sectarian differences but also creates mutual respect. Moreover, it is Amsterdam he is speaking about—the city itself and not the Amsterdam Exchange, which, moreover, was older than London's. Voltaire's aim is not so much to extol the merits and show the possibility of civic harmony and an expansive sociability as it is to argue that commerce itself is the source of sociability. The London Exchange was a specific, special, and temporary place that ignored religious difference; its main purpose was profit-making, presumably for the sake of all humankind, but it would leave intact the peculiar practices of the sects, who, outside its precincts, continued to live apart in a state of incomprehension of the other. But it seemed not to matter to Voltaire:

> [T]hat place more venerable than many a court, [where] you will see representatives of all the nations assembled . . . for the profit of mankind. There the Jew, the Mahometan, and the Christian deal with one another as if they were of the same religion, and reserve the name of infidel for those who go bankrupt. There the Presbyterian trusts the Anabaptist, and the Church of England man accepts the promise of the Quaker. On leaving these peaceable and free assemblies, some go to the synagogue, others in search of a drink; this man is on the way to be baptized in a great tub in the name of the Father, by the Son, to the Holy Ghost; that man is having the foreskin of his son cut off, and a Hebraic formula mumbled over the child that he himself can make nothing of; others are going to their church to await the inspiration of God with their hats on; and all are satisfied.[47]

For Erich Auerbach, this is parody and it is offensive. It bespeaks a mind that aims a "searchlight" on "one small part of an extensive complex, while everything else which might explain, derive, and possibly counterbalance the thing emphasized is left in the dark." The style and intent are, Auerbach

states, those of a trickster and a simplifier. "[E]verybody knows" that such a device—Auerbach speaks as a Jewish exile from Nazi persecution—offers "more than enough examples from the very recent past," and "will feel how difficult it is to represent historical themes in general, and how unfit they are for legend."[48] Voltaire's tactic, it also seems to me, might be explained as diversionary, and as such is a *divertissement*, a genre he favored. Auerbach does not doubt his serious concern for ideas, but remarks scathingly on the "impertinence of the Enlightenment"—its use of irony to enhance the author's own cleverness while belittling and reducing his target to a state of inferiority.[49] With one fell swoop, it might also be said, the fragmentation displaces, yet totalizes, both the phenomenon described and the describer, and gives omniscience a bad name.

Voltaire, for all his acerbity, had a keen perception of the economic realities of the eighteenth century. As well, the *Encyclopédie* articles on commerce, as we saw, strangely appear more in tune with, and reflected the great strides made in, commerce and finance, even if agriculture had not been displaced from its premier position in the leading economies of the Western world, including Britain. It may indeed be that the signs of gathering change produced a reaction in France, favoring more enlightened agricultural policies, including the abolition of internal grain and wine tariffs that were hampering both large and small producers. We should remember that Voltaire and, even more so, the writers of the *Encyclopédie*'s articles on commerce and finance, called for a balance among the principal sectors of the economy, and did not single out Jews as principal actors. A notable shift in French economic thought was registered in the last quarter of the century. The economic world came to be seen, especially by the physiocrats, as a world of competing interests, opposing agriculture to commerce as the chief source of a nation's wealth, with no end in sight until, in their view, the superior claims of the first would be recognized and become the bedrock of public economic policy. Some headway was made in this direction with the movement towards the elimination of internal trade barriers, which was matched in 1786 by the Vergennes (Eden) Treaty between England and France, increasing the easier flow of products between the two countries. This change was proof that some attempt was being made to introduce economic reforms that would not favor one part of the economy to the detriment of the other. De Pinto had made the same points earlier in the decade.[50]

The Jews were swept up in this momentous spurt of reform, as if their future status could be understood only in terms of larger changes that they must be helped to weather and then gradually assume non-parasitic roles in a regenerated society. In the 1770s and 1780s, we encounter new defenders of the Jew, who at best would take steps to willingly dissociate himself, but, if necessary, be compelled by legislation to turn away from the world of commerce in favor of artisanal and agricultural work, leading to the final sundering of his connection with luxury—an odious and shameful source of

immorality and sexual promiscuity in their eyes. The leading advocates of such regeneration were all, it seems, disciples of physiocratic thought, and they associated, without adducing any solid arguments and without blinking an eyelash, Jewish commercial transactions with their most egregious practices in the small world of peasant needs. The Jews who were chiefly concerned were the impoverished Ashkenazi, a world of tinkers, craftsmen and petty moneylenders. Yet the reformers appeared at the same time to conflate the two kinds of Jewish commerce, the large- and the small-scale. Adolphe Thiéry wanted to wean Jews away from their alleged exclusive links with commerce, which he flatly stated was the chief source of French society's infatuation with luxury, and to merge them with the general population in a pastoral economy.[51] Similar, if not always identical, views were expressed by others, such as Latour-Foissac, who saw agriculture as the occupation best armed against the corruptions of commerce;[52] Mirabeau, who in his rush to reduce the influence of commerce in the national economy, followed in his father's physiocratic footsteps;[53] the Jansenist abbé Henri Grégoire, who came close to reaffirming some of the current physical stereotypes of the Jew, believed that Christian conversion would end their physical degeneration;[54] and not least, Metz's leading Jewish intellectual, Isaiah Berr Bing, friend to Mendelssohn, who appeared almost unwholesomely eager to buy the common charges that Jews were too prominent in commerce.[55] Berr's repugnance for commerce and enthusiasm for a future for Jewish workers on the land would return them to an innocent life and redeem them from a shameful past. If not identical with Christian Wilhelm von Dohm's proposals for a new age in which Jews, as citizens exercising their rights, yet following their own laws, would work in towns as artisans, on the land as cultivators, and reduce their dependence on commerce. This plan was close enough to suggest that—as we have seen in the case of Isaac de Pinto, who, however, upheld the primacy of commerce—images of Jewish life and character crossed boundaries separating Jews and non-Jews, yet produced no consensus.[56]

A kind of Spartan attitude, condemning both unbridled wealth and a presumed innate Jewish proclivity to exploit it for pleasure, changed the contours of political debate. It was as if the desired changes in social conditions and political reform could not be achieved unless they were pressed on all fronts, including the emancipation of the Jews. Jews could then join the general citizenry in a republic of true virtue. Jews and non-Jews would then share a common destiny, and the shame and degradation that had immemorially been attached to the first would fall away at the same time as the second would rise from their poverty and humiliation to live as freer human beings. This is not to say that the advocates of emancipation put the Jews first in their calculations. They were animated principally by a vision of beneficence, but a heavily guarded one. No sacrifice was to be exacted; sacrifice meant surrendering things of value, and by no measure could the monetary and non-monetary values possessed by Jews be considered worth

preserving. The price, if any price could be attached to what they would be giving up, would be borne principally by the Jews themselves, but it would, with all the naïveté these wellwishers easily mustered, be a price worth paying.

Voltaire's parody of the Jew in the stock exchange makes visible his near ignorance of the affluent Jews of his time. It would not have been impossible those many decades since his observation of the traders in the London Stock Exchange—even if, after his return from England, he lived for many years far away from cosmopolitan centers—for him to surmise how a few Jews had improved their material wellbeing. But he appears not to have linked that affluence with the softening of *moeurs* and sensitivities to the wider world of the intellect, which lay at the core of his history of the civilizing impulse in Western Europe. Wealth and leisure were, after all, the gateway to rational thought; and why should Jews *qua* Jews not be part of the civilizing process? As a publicist of the first rank whose career was made by the printing press, he knew how its ubiquity had enormously changed, not only the scale but also the scope of debate on all disputed matters; indeed, had made intellectual dispute a central part of culture and politics as never before. Mendelssohn knew this as well, but more poignantly. And he knew, moreover, how profoundly the oral transmission of tradition and Judaism were being radically changed forever by print. Everything we know of nature and human beings was, he sadly wrote, no longer transmitted by word of mouth. Living dialogue, or at least its spirit, was dead. Books were replacing it, perhaps at too great a price—the desiccation of the human soul. There was, however, no looking back.[57] It was by means of books—not only the one book—that Jews would enter the modern world; and Mendelssohn was one of the key thinkers who tried to guide them there. Voltaire's faith in the enlightened mind nevertheless did not open his eyes fully to the possibilities of a breakthrough in Jewish intellectual life itself, one that was ready to share in the general freeing of the mind from the restraints of theology. In its widest sense, assimilation, such as the influences on Jewish thought that was ready to receive non-Jewish influences in the Middle Ages, opened it up to wider philosophic questions. But we must recall his belief that Jews were incapable of philosophic thought, because, as he said, without realizing that there was much that he did not know about medieval philosophy, they dared not venture far from a body of rigid legalistic thought and doctrine, fortified by ignorance and superstition against the intrusions of the modern world. This judgment was echoed, but only in part, in Diderot's long eclectic article in the *Encyclopédie* where he deigned, perhaps with less contempt than Voltaire, to call Jewish philosophy—a *mélange* of reason and revelation, impenetrable obscurities, and blind veneration for rabbinic authority. But, contrary to Voltaire's dismissals, the earlier part of the article favorably compares Moses, David, Solomon, and Daniel, "men of uncommon intelligence" and legislators of the first rank, with the Greek philosophers, the Egyptian Hierophants, and the Indian

Gymnosophists, who were, he concludes, indeed superior to them. (It is strange that he lumped together Greek philosophy and Egyptian and Indian religious rites, and did not focus his comparison between Jewish and Greek thought.) In addition, he does not pass over the twelfth century Ibn-Ezra for his contributions to philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, and medicine, nor does he fail to mention Maimonides for his knowledge of Greek and Aristotelian philosophy and his founding of an Academy in Alexandria that drew students from Egypt, Syria, and Judaea.[58]

Despite signs that would have told Voltaire otherwise, and, also, because of his lack of appreciation for Ibn-Ezra and Maimonides, and finally, because of his superficial knowledge of Spinoza, Voltaire preferred to write off the Jews as a people hostile to, and incapable of, critical thought. To be sure there were some Jews in his own lifetime who were exceptions, but in general they would remain mired in, and unable to rise from, their ancient pedantries. Voltaire's brief exchange with Isaac de Pinto, the Dutch Jewish economist we have met, a man who prided himself as a philosopher interested in science and literature, is proof that Jews could philosophize as well as non-Jews. De Pinto's references in his *Letter Upon the Jealousy of Commerce* to Leibnitz, Voltaire and Rousseau reveal a man who cultivated letters and philosophy; he had after all been a secretary of the Dutch Academy of Sciences. He could no more be barred from the enlightened community than Voltaire himself. As early as 1762, de Pinto challenged Voltaire's "violent and unjust" attacks against Jews (*OC*, 109, D10579, de Pinto to Voltaire, July 10, 1762, 94–95). His published reply to Voltaire is fully elaborated in his *Apologie pour la nation juive*. He found Voltaire's general attack on "an entire nation" offensive, and tried to clarify what he thought were important distinctions between Western Sephardic Jews and the Ashkenazim. Taking the high road, he said Jews in Central and Eastern Europe were culturally and intellectually inferior.[59] He left himself open, however, to Voltaire's swift sarcasm when he spoke in the same breath of Jewish adaptability and their obstinacy. It was the last alleged Jewish characteristic that Voltaire pounced on; the first he dismissed, having in his other writings spent, as we have seen, some time showing how Jews lived in various societies during their years of exile. His arrogant reply was clothed in a shower of magnanimity:

> I will tell you with equal frankness that many people can neither endure your laws, nor your books, nor your superstitions; they say that your nation has from time immemorial inflicted harm on itself, and has done the same to humankind. If you are a philosopher, as you appear to be, your thoughts must be the same as the thoughts of those gentlemen, but you will not say so. Superstition is the most abominable scourge on earth; it is superstition that sends you to the stake by people who are honest in their other dealings. There are ways in which human nature takes on a diabolical aspect. One would shrivel up in horror if it were always seen in

that way. But good men, when riding past the place of execution, where the wheel is turning, order their coachmen to make haste and seek distraction from the frightful spectacle they see en route at the opera. I can take up a dispute with you on the nature of the sciences that you attribute to the ancient Jews, and show you that they know no more about it than Frenchmen did at the time of Chilperic; I could make you agree that the jargon of a small province, a mixture of Chaldaic, Phoenician and Arabic dialects, was a language as impoverished and barbaric as our ancient Gallic. But I would perhaps anger you, and you appear to me to be too worthy a man to merit provocation. Remain a Jew, since you are one; you will no longer massacre forty-two thousand men for failing to pronounce the word Shibboleth, nor twenty-four thousand for having slept with the Midianite women; but be a philosopher, that is the very best I can wish for you in this brief life.

(*OC*, 109, 10600, Voltaire to de Pinto, July 21, 1762, 120–21)[60]

Leave behind, Voltaire tells de Pinto, all the nonsense of the past. If you were a true philosopher you would say so aloud and you would not repeat the fantasies that the ancient Jews knew anything about the principles of science, equally unknown by primitive Gauls. Neither the ancient Jews nor the Gauls possessed a language adequate for the conceptualization of scientific ideas. Remember as well that humans are evil and capable of horrors, and that Jews had at one time committed them for the slenderest of reasons. As a Jew you have no choice except to be one, but true salvation lies in philosophy. How should this advice be understood? Voltaire's "la douce commerce" does not, as we noted earlier, expand its reach beyond the world of financial transactions to encompass outsiders, like the Jews, in a wider sociability. "La douce commerce" presumably was the first step towards sociability, but the way towards full sociability demanded enthusiasm for philosophy and rejection of ancient beliefs and loyalties. There seems, as we review his strictures and promise of liberation, to be a retreat from those instances in which, by advocating assimilation as a solution, he asked Jews to renounce their Jewishness by joining the world of universal inquiry, unrestrained by *a priori*, especially religious, beliefs: one could now, however, on the basis of what he writes to de Pinto, be both a Jew and a philosopher. The change of heart, if it may thus be called, could not but intensify equivocations on both sides of the Jewish and non-Jewish divide.[61] The questionability of Voltaire's proposals, even if we might detect in them his irresistible playfulness, were, however, more emotionally, religiously, and intellectually fraught for the handful of Jews who were asking how they could, if at all, reconcile sacred texts and secular thought and avoid conversion, for by no stretch of the imagination could it be said that in practical terms they were living in a secular society. In ways that Voltaire could not imagine, thinkers such as Spinoza, as we saw, had already wrestled with the problem, and Mendelssohn, too, who did not shy away from

it. For Spinoza, it was possible for a purified religion to coexist with philosophy: the rational person would embrace philosophy, and the common person, religion.[62]

In de Pinto's time, Judaism was already hovering between disinterest and obligatory participation in Jewish community life. He could not rescue himself from a life of intellectual and social ambiguity, nor is it clear that he wished to do so. The picture was not entirely the same for Mendelssohn, who stated that Jews could obey the laws of Judaism, and, at the same time, subscribe to the rational and universal principles of the Enlightenment. A Jew could, it seems, be a Jew and a philosopher, but it does not look as if the advice and the argument were of the same kind for Mendelssohn and Voltaire. One of the sources of Voltaire's different kind of ambiguity lies in his reaction to the facts of strict Jewish observance, including the study of the Torah as a major religious duty, even if he had been familiar with Mendelssohn's Judaism, which stressed that it:

> knows nothing of a revealed religion in the sense in which Christians define this term. The Israelites possess a divine legislation—laws, commandments, statutes, rules of conduct, instruction in God's will and what they are to do to attain temporal and eternal salvation.[63]

What remains in doubt is whether Voltaire would have treated the distinction as anything more than obfuscation, on the grounds that it continued to demand strict adherence to the Jewish God as legislator. It is not likely to have lessened his belief that Jews had, as a mark of their chosenness, closed their minds to alternative explanations for the nature of belief. His efforts over a period of some seven years to shield himself from a critique of his anti-Judaism, launched by the Christian philosemites, abbé Antoine Guénée and Elie Fréron, were hardly an unqualified success, even as he said that he did not hate Jews. The two anti-*philosophes*, skillfully turned the tables on Voltaire, by using satire and irony to defend the Jews. They stressed and reinforced the links between Judaism and Christianity in precise opposition to Voltaire's unwavering conviction that the consequences of religion's past, but lessening, stranglehold on modern civilization, had been disastrous.[64]

On the other hand, Mendelssohn's plea for tolerance was not unlike Voltaire's earlier polemic: "Oh, I should not"—Mendelssohn wrote—"like to have for a friend who, though he had this experience in his life, can still be intolerant or hate his neighbor for expressing himself differently or for thinking differently in religious matters. Such a man has stripped himself of his humanity."[65] Another sympathetic chord might have been struck in Voltaire's sensibility and might have changed his mind about Jewish intractability: Mendelssohn had no doubt that the "Mosaic constitution did not persist long in its original purity … and had developed a crack which continued to widen until the structure fell completely apart."[66]

It was not until the Haskalah (the Jewish Enlightenment) that such questions became urgent in Jewish and non-Jewish intellectual circles. Voltaire belonged to an earlier generation. The Haskalah, Shmuel Feiner writes, owed little to the French Enlightenment. Its intellectual elite were German Jews who intended nothing less than a revolution separating the sacred and the profane, opening up Jewish consciousness to the scientific and historic knowledge of the world, needed to regenerate Jewish collective life, but not outside it, while forming the basis of a normal relationship with the state and doing battle within it against the opponents of such change. Unlike Voltaire, the maskilim were decidedly not advocates of assimilation.[67] The unresolved tensions within the Haskalah and the opposition to its intellectual foundations in the larger Jewish community were problems that defied easy resolution and did not go away. Mirabeau's championing of Mendelssohn did not receive much notice in France until some years after Voltaire's death. Voltaire fashioned his ideas about Jews before these rather unexpected developments occurred. They remained static, while the world around him was changing. In time, reality would expose the limitations inherent in his views. He remained too far from the threshold that would have taken him across it to perceive more fully these changing perspectives. He was stuck. He took refuge and probably derived some satisfaction in his own talent for obfuscation, disguising it as a teasing yet serio-comic throw-away. Men like de Pinto and Zalkind Hourwitz, represented a new kind of Jew. They had indeed crossed the threshold, ready to adopt new notions of the individual self, while not abandoning their sense of belonging to a collective group that provided a sense of identity. The process did not constitute a clean break, but rather created one with ragged edges. De Pinto proclaimed himself as "a citizen of the world; not cold and indifferent, but zealous, and humane." He loved, he said, "all nations, because in all nations there are men who deserve to be loved, and they all belong to human kind … I am pleading the cause of humanity."[68] Hourwitz embraced the ideals of the Enlightenment and had a position in the Royal Library in Paris. It is not likely that either would have considered Voltaire's quip as a mere bit of characteristic sarcasm. Matters were too serious.[69] They would not have been averse from seeking shelter behind it, and would perhaps have been eager to do so as the only way to achieve a more decent legal, civil, and political status. Emancipation came in the years after 1789, but not without serious and prolonged debate about Jewish civil, political, and religious rights. When French revolutionary legislation struck down the corporate structure of the *ancien régime*, it also seemed to strike at the Jews, because they were seen both as a corporate group, and as a separate nationality, but after September 1791 they lost their status as a separate group in a secularized state, and, in exchange, gained political liberties as individuals.[70]

The subject of universalism was thus put on the revolutionary agenda in 1789. What we find is that the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the

Citizen contains in its resounding phrases two ideas, one that makes an abstract appeal to the rights of all humankind, another that arises from the specific conditions of the various provincial rights and customs, such as those that were, for example, peculiar to Bretons and Basques, and of the French themselves, who were notionally seen as fulfilling a universal ideal, but one that the more radical revolutionaries identified with the *patrie*. The first transcends region, nation and homeland, the second is rooted very much in these categories. Nation and *patrie* may be notions as abstract as humankind, but they are far less so, while they are not flexible enough to include within their conceptual and geographic borders people, like the Jews, who were believed to be inflexible in their beliefs and customs and who found their way with difficulty and irresolution. Joseph Goy did not have the Jews in mind, when speaking of a particular cultural tradition. He states only in general terms that the French Civil Code embodies "*the law*," by setting firm limits that must never be transgressed. It established a dialectic of prohibition that rested on two principles: the notion of public order and the concept of proper behavior. In the hands of the state, bourgeois society, and its judges, this proved a very "flexible instrument."[71] The Civil Code's universal principles, however, were betrayed after 1940, as we shall see in the Conclusion when Vichy, in complete disregard of the Civil Code, introduced anti-Jewish legislation that removed Jews from the state's protection, resulting in the deportation of over 75,000 Jews to the killing factories in the east.

# 5 Voltaire's reading of the Old Testament

## Voltaire's Old Testament Sources

Voltaire's knowledge and dissection of the Old Testament has attracted much scholarly attention.[1] The extent of his reading—he did not have a knowledge of Hebrew and relied on translations—in the words of the editors of the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, was "immense," and included a Latin translation of the Mishnah (the selection of oral laws from the Talmud); French translations of Philo of Alexandria, (Philo Judaeus), the Hellenized Jewish theologian (ca. 20 BCE–50 CE); the translation of Flavius Josephus by Arnaud d'Andilly (*OC*, 35, 76–77). It leaned on the *Commentaire* by the Benedictine Dom Calmet, hardly a friend to the Jews; Etienne Fourmont, author of a study of Calmet's *Commentaire* (*Lettre de R. Ismael juif converti, à M. l'abbé Houteville sur son livre intitulé La Religion chrétienne prouvée par les faits*), Paris, 1722, a distinguished Arabic and Hebraic scholar who taught in the early years of the eighteenth century at the Collège des Lecteurs Royaux and wrote sympathetically about rabbinic contributions to science, medicine, philosophy, and biblical scholarship; and Richard Simon, a prolific writer on Jewish subjects. Jacques Basnage, to whom we referred in an earlier chapter, was another important source. His *Histoire de la religion des Juifs, depuis Jésus-Christ jusqu'à présent, pour servir de supplément et de continuation à l'Histoire de Joseph* was published in 1706–7, and in an expanded version in 1716–21. Yosef Yerushalmi, who argues that Jews had preferred mythology to history, describes Basnage's work as "the first real attempt in modern times at a coherent and comprehensive post-biblical history of the Jews."[2] It was, he says, from outside Judaism that a Jewish historiography came into being. Basnage challenged Catholicism by establishing a basis for its corruptions in rabbinic corruptions of revelation and sought to create a theologic and historic foundation for Protestantism's "pure" links with an uncorrupted primitive Judaism.[3] Voltaire made this theme an important part of his own polemic and, of course, was much more intent on supporting Basnage's first, rather than his second, claim.

Jacques Basnage is important for another reason. As a French Huguenot minister and diplomat who lived in Holland as a refugee, his comments on

Spinoza were the source for some of the dread in which Spinoza was held.[4] Basnage's anti-Spinozism was likely to have been taken up by Voltaire. Spinoza's critique of Scripture was seminal. It secularized the history of the biblical Jews. It did not, it seems, play a prominent part in Voltaire's dismissals of biblical revelation. Links between them did exist, as we saw in Chapter 1, but they were not direct nor conclusive either textually or theoretically, because, in the first instance, Spinoza's views on Scripture were not fully treated in Voltaire's comments, and, in the second, because of the many seventeenth and eighteenth century versions of Spinoza, whose ideas were misrepresented through the eyes of others who were mainly hostile to them. Henri de Boulainvilliers was the chief eighteenth century intellectual guide to Spinoza's ideas. He was hardly uncritical, yet in the end he yielded to his stronger conviction that the idea of creation could not be seriously entertained.[5] In fact, though Bayle greatly influenced Boulainvilliers' radicalism, Boulainvilliers criticized him for distorting Spinoza's ideas.[6] But it was Bayle's, not Boulainvilliers' superior understanding, of Spinoza that Voltaire consulted, as we pointed out at the beginning of this study. Nevertheless, Voltaire's fear of atheism prevented him from probing further into, and dealing with, Spinoza's doctrine of one substance and his argument that God cannot be considered separate from the universe, ideas that Boulainvilliers pursued. In thus sheltering himself, Voltaire substantially shut himself away from the most radical mind's arguments against the God of the Old Testament and organized Christianity. He was not prepared and was intellectually unequipped to give Spinoza the attention he deserved. It is regrettable that he missed a chance to see how, if he could have overcome his distaste for Spinoza's reputed atheism, Spinoza's ideas might have enriched his own.

So, at best we have a partial picture, and much of it is elliptical. Of course, the reception accorded Spinoza was neither direct nor univocal. It was complicated by the fact that his ideas could not be discussed openly. Nonetheless, they circulated in a welter of theologic and philosophic confusion in both conservative and radical circles, each claiming the legitimacy of its appropriation. Voltaire was content, as late as 1769, in his *Epitre* to the mysterious author of the *Traité des trois imposteurs*, which was also known under the title, *L'Esprit de Spinosa*, and which emerged in printed form from its underground existence early in the eighteenth century, to reassert his firm belief in creation, chiding Spinoza for denying the absence of a supreme architect, acknowledged by Zoroaster, Solon, Socrates, and, above all, Cicero, who was the source of social peace, the solace of human beings, and a refuge from bloody wars and fanaticism. The materiality of the soul is not to be found in Spinoza, but it is in the *Esprit*. Voltaire appears to have fallen for the obfuscation. Still, as Stuart Hampshire contends, if the soul is not a material substance, the materialist and immaterialist explanatory systems were for Spinoza compatible, and represented different ways of thinking about reality in which human beings are both

thinking things and physical things.[7] A blunt denial of the mind's primacy constituted an assault on the immateriality of the soul as well, and would have appalled Voltaire. The *Traité* was also easy to ridicule, for it advanced no new arguments. It borrowed from many authors, including Hobbes, but more so from Spinoza. Perhaps, because of its denial of the existence, not only of God and heaven, but also hell and the devil, that Voltaire wrote, "But of this tremendous obstacle and enemy, fanaticism/I have caused God to be worshipped when I vanquished the devil [Mais, de ce fanatisme ennemi formidable/J'ai fait adorer Dieu quand j'ai vaincu le Diable]." He did not hesitate to call himself the guardian of true religion that he had rescued from a climate of intolerance, and, in that role, was showing humanity that philosophy was the force of enlightenment leading to universal brotherhood that would one day extinguish superstition and the old hatreds dividing Protestants, Catholic, Jews, and Muslims. It is curious that he did not seize on the *Traité*'s savage attack on superstitious beliefs in spirits and demons that existed only in the feverish imagination of a deceived and self-deceiving populace. Voltaire's philosophy, for all its bravado, stopped short of the seriousness of the *Traité*, in taking up Spinoza's ideas, however much it distorted them. Instead, Voltaire preferred satire and playfulness. (Voltaire's "Epitre à l'auteur du livre des trois imposteurs 1769)" in *OCM*, 10, 402–5).[8]

Paul Hazard, who looked into the question of Voltaire's links with Spinoza more than 60 years ago, may be right in suggesting that Voltaire used the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* as the more accessible text in mounting his own attack against the Old Testament. Indeed, Voltaire called it "very profound and the best he has done [très profound, et le meilleur qu'il a fait]," but, in spite of its erudition, he felt he had to condemn it. Spinoza was the first to point out, he continues, that the Hebrew *ruhag*, translated as soul, meant breath, as he was the first to say that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, but that, intoxicated by Descartes, he denied God the creator, and in his place ascribed to a single substance and power the existence of human reason, all forms of life, and natural phenomena, as well as space itself.[9] Voltaire preferred an impersonal Supreme Being, minus any trappings of religiosity. Hazard, while not neglecting Norman Torrey's praise of Voltaire for having the courage to reexamine his beliefs in his old age,[10] believes that Voltaire was too superficial and too pressed for time to do justice to the philosophic problems the *Ethic*s raised, and most of all was *a priori* ill-disposed against a thinker who denied final causes and freedom of will.[11]

With his incomparable knowledge of the various currents that fed skepticism, Richard Popkin demonstrates that Voltaire used Jewish anti-Christian materials that undermined a central principle in Christian theology, namely, that there was the strongest evidence to doubt that there was any link between Jewish prophecies in the Old Testament and events in the New Testament. These views gained currency in rabbinic circles in The Netherlands in the

seventeenth century. Ironically, Voltaire incorporated them in his article on "Messiah" in the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, taking some of his arguments from Rabbi Saul Levi Morteira, the chief Sephardic rabbi in Amsterdam, who publicly condemned Spinoza for his denial of the Mosaic Law and divine Revelation (*OC*, 36, 350–69). Those materials bear out, Popkin argues, "the story of how skepticism turned from friend to foe of religion."[12] One of Popkin's interesting evaluations of the Jewish anti-Christian literature that came out of Amsterdam is the assertion that Jewish history was neither a history of failure nor a proof of God's rejection. In fact, Jewish explanations of biblical texts were thought to be more reasonable than those offered by Christian commentators. On the other hand, the free thinkers ignored all the views that were favorable to the Jews, mentally excising them and using only the anti-Christian arguments. Voltaire was only one of them.[13]

## Myths, fables, legends, and history

From 1750 until his death in 1778, Voltaire published a number of works critical of Judeo-Christianity. He did so by following in the footsteps of contemporary critical commentators and interpreters of the Old Testament, which has been called by modern scholars "the most unsystematic of sacred texts, representing 1000 years of textual development from different areas and social and religious groups."[14] He put his commitment to his search for historic truth caustically and arrogantly, for example, when he challenged interpretations of Job's sufferings. Imposing a reading upon clear passages, he said, is the most certain way to achieve agreement; indeed, the easiest way for honest men to know that those who do so are acting in bad faith ("Resurrection," *OC*, 36, 493). The Book of Job, which invites reflection on the problem of evil, elicited nothing of the sort from Voltaire who, however, made it the central question in *Candide*. He likes and sympathizes with Job and is contemptuous of his companions, but he is more concerned to trace the story of Job to earlier religions, disputing the Book's originality (Satan was a Chaldean invention, for example). He insists, as well, that it is older than the Book of Genesis. He also reduces it to a literal recounting of Job's pecuniary losses, and repeats the claim that the Jews came late to the written word and had mastered it only by chance. It is a monument, as are the other biblical books, to the imagination from which no truth can be extracted ("Job," *OC*, 36, 243–53).[15] Voltaire took advantage of the new criticism, a tradition that questioned the notion of absolute and fixed meanings in the Old Testament, but then proceeded to say what he thought they should be if they were based on more critical grounds, as others did before him, and have done so since. So he was combative, but his argumentativeness was specifically aimed at highlighting the fables incorporated in it and giving them no more credence than those handed down by other cultures, as we already saw in our discussion of the *Essai sur les moeurs.*

He scornfully dismissed Bossuet's apologia as a deceptive device to justify monarchic government. Yet he could not apply his irony and wit to the accounts in 1 Kings, 1, 2 without himself accepting them as having some basis in history. His objection was that, what he considered a bloody saga, was, in Bossuet's defense of the monarchy, at no time, to be subjected to scrutiny and questioned as a foundation for reasonable governance on the grounds that God's will was providential and inscrutable. For example, by designating Solomon as his heir and thrusting aside his eldest son, Adonias (Adonijah), David was simply following God's commandment. How could one swallow such a justification, Voltaire asked, unless one chose to shut one's eyes to Solomon's outrageous murder of the legitimate king, who was the eldest son and his brother, "whose rights were confirmed by Pontiff Abiathar and General Joab." As he put it, "[L]et us acknowledge that it is more difficult than people think to take lessons on the rights of people and governments from Holy Scripture, handed down to the Jews, and then to us, for more sublime purposes." Then, by a sleight of hand, Voltaire segues—and with tongue in cheek, in the very next paragraph—into the devastating comment that the security of the people depended on slaughter and civil war, and that it was hard to see how the people benefit from such a "right" and discover "a way of governing likely to advance the art of thinking and the smooth-running of society."[16]

Another slashing attack on Bossuet and the Jews occurs in *The ABC*, where he again condemns the ideas of a man who bases himself on Scripture, the politics of:

> an unhappy people who were bloodthirsty without being warlike, usurious without being commercial, brigands without being able to hold on to their spoils, almost always enslaved and almost always in revolt, sold in markets by Titus and Adrian just as the animal called unclean by the Jews is sold, and which was more useful than they were. I'll leave to the declaimer Bossuet the politics of the little kings of Judah and Samaria, who understood only murder, starting with their own David who, having followed the trade of a robber in order to become king, murdered Uriah as soon as he was master. And that wise Solomon who started off by murdering his own brother Adonias at the foot of the altar. I'm tired of the education of the young being devoted by these ridiculous pedants to the study of the history of such a people.[17]

He wanted to leave behind all of "ancient so-called history," its incredible stories, and its myths, whether they were to be found in the Old Testament or in Herodotus, and to point modern man towards the study of "modern history," where they will "try to learn the mistakes of his own country, and from those of his neighbors."[18] And, by including in his catalog of Jewish iniquities, the comment that Jews were "usurious without being commercial," he called attention to what he intimated was the distance between the

Jewish practice of usury and a fuller participation in the economy of the modern world. And, as have seen in Chapter 4, this assessment prevented him from a measured appreciation of the Jewish contributions to modern commercial practices.

Voltaire, while recognizing the mix of myth, legend, and history in the Old Testament—and indeed in the histories of all peoples—takes us only so far in distinguishing fabulous miracles from actual happenings, the supernatural from the natural. He dismisses as unreliable the fables, myths, and oral traditions, including as well the proverbs and songs that form folk memories, as a treacherous historic source, especially in the case of nomadic and wandering peoples. This at once raises a difficult problem in considering the thrust of his case against the veracity of the Old Testament. He has either to reject the Old Testament as a total fraud, or to trace its course to distinguish between its mythical and historic parts and how, even so, they could be defended as forming an integrated whole. He does not pursue the first line of reasoning, and is not clear about the second. True enough, he says that he wishes to consider only the historic parts and leave the "divine" parts to others—mysteries—he says in one place, that cannot be touched (*OCM*, 11, 117); yet he simply turns his back on everything that smacks of fancy and invention, not giving a single thought to the meanings they might have held for those who wrote it or for those who took sustenance from it. The result is that he allows himself the luxury of condemning nearly all of its parts as an unreliable guide to Jewish religion and Jewish history. From time to time, he concedes, for example, that Jewish sexual perversities, as related in the Old Testament, were widespread in eastern societies, all repugnant to, and an offence against, the decencies of Western cultures, and that it was not right "to judge the manners, customs, ancient ways of speaking by our own; they resemble them no more than the French language resembles Chaldean and Arabic [juger des moeurs, des usages, des façons de parler anciennes, par les nôtres; elles ne se ressemblent plus que la langue française ne ressemble au chaldéen et à l'arabe]" (*OCM*, 11, 127).

His judgment on Joseph ben Mathias, the first century Jewish author of Jewish Antiquities, which he wrote in Greek, better-known as Titus Flavius Josephus,[19] shows perhaps best of all how he cannot give up the search for historic evidence. But, because, as he says repeatedly, the evidence is either shrouded in fables, or non-existent, he slips into a species of agnosticism, seeming to be fair, but his remarks are weighted against a favorable treatment of the Jews, and, as well, of Josephus who found favor in the Flavian dynasty after the death of Nero. Through Voltaire's eyes, we find instead that at the time of Titus, the Romans ignored Josephus. They could, as the dominant people of a world they had conquered, simply have ignored the history of the Jews, "a puny nation of slaves [une chétive nation d'esclaves]." Moreover, how could they have known that Josephus had made additions to the Bible, and had passed other parts in silence; in short, that he had given his history a spurious authenticity. "The Romans were unable to distinguish

what had been drawn from an impure source from what Josephus had taken from a sacred one. [Les Romains ne pouvaient distinguer ce qui avait été puisé dans une source impure de ce que Josèphe avait tiré d'une source sacré]." But why hold them responsible? After all, the Romans did not think of the Old Testament as a book of sacred knowledge. If they read it, all they could do was treat it disdainfully as a joke. What else could they do with tales of angels appearing to the patriarchs, the passage through the Red Sea, the ten plagues, the inconceivable growth of the Jewish population in such a brief time, the sun and the moon stopped in their orbits—all these fables:

> which are a sign that, (as the work) of this obscure nation, they were treated with the kind of scorn that a conquering people of so many nations—a people (personified) in a king, but from whom God had concealed himself—naturally felt for a people reduced to a state of slavery [qui signalèrent cette nation ignorée furent traités avec ce mépris qu'un people vainqueur de tant de nations, un peuple-roi, mais à qui Dieu s'était caché, avait naturellement pour un people barbare réduit en esclavage].
>
> (*OCM*, 11, 130–31)

Josephus also commits the unpardonable sin of giving credit to the biblical Jews for scientific and artistic achievements, while the truth was that they had, as the Scriptures did in fact say, derived all such knowledge from the Egyptians. Even more ludicrous was Josephus' claim that Ptolemy Philadelphia bought a Greek translation of Jewish books completed by Alexandrian Jews, when no historian or foreign poet had ever spoken of their existence. Josephus' inventions were an insult to history:

> If it was a crime to insert something in another language, it was doubtless a much greater crime to bring all the Greeks within reach of knowing them. But at least Josephus … agrees that the Greeks never had had a knowledge of the books of his nation. [[S]I c'était un crime d'en insérer quelque chose dans une autre langue, c'était sans doute un bien plus grand crime de mettre tous les Grecs à portée de les connaître. Mais au moins Josèphe … convient que les Grecs n'avaient jamais eu connaissance de livres de sa nation].

The Hellenizing Jews borrowed much from the Greeks, whose language was adopted in Asia Minor and in part of Egypt; the Greeks borrowed nothing from the Jews (*OCM*, 11, 144–45).

This reduction was a rather one-sided account of the history of the Jews in Alexandria and their relationship to Greek thought and philosophy. Arnoldo Momigliano writes that only a few of the Greek-speaking Jews can be defined as Hellenizing Jews, and that Josephus was one of them. He adds that, because Josephus' intention was "to write a history of the Jews for the pagans (Romans), [he] was compelled to resort to Greek models of historiography."[20]

At the same time, Momigliano goes on to say, Josephus insisted on the superiority of the Old Testament's Legislator God to the law-givers, Lycurgus and Solon.[21] Voltaire seems to have overlooked Josephus' words of praise for Scripture, sentiments that resounded with a profound loyalty to, and a faith in, its uniqueness, when he dismissed accusations against Jews by Hellenistic Greeks in Josephus' book, *Against Apion* (an Alexandrian Greek academic):

> We have given practical proof of our reverence for our own Scriptures. For, although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured either to add, or to remove, or to alter a syllable; and it is an instinct with every Jew, from the day of his birth, to regard them as the decrees of God, to abide by them, and, if need be, cheerfully to die for them. Time and again ere now the sight has been witnessed of prisoners enduring tortures and death in every form in the theatres, rather than utter a single word against the laws. . . . What Greek would endure as much for the same cause? Even to save the entire collection of his nation's writings from destruction he would not face the smallest personal injury. For to the Greeks they are mere stories improvised according to the fancy of their authors.[22]

For Voltaire such reverence was totally misguided and redolent of a lingering primitivism that survived long after the outlines of modern society were becoming manifest. Only a civilized, urban society can move beyond myth. Knowledge of the past, even when documentary evidence is available, is fragmentary, for little that has been recorded survives time and the destruction of war:

> It is only at the conclusion of several centuries that a history constructed from a few details may give way to well-informed registers, and this primitive history is always a mingled with a false fantasy by means of which the absence of truth is replaced. [Ce n'est qu'au bout de plusieurs siècles qu'un histoire un peu détaillé peut succéder à ces registres informes, et cette première histoire est toujours melée d'un faux merveilleux par lequel on veut remplacer la vérité qui manque].
>
> (*OCM*, 11, 151)

We hear nothing more from Voltaire about the Hellenizing Jews in the cosmopolitan city of Alexandria. Arnoldo Momigliano again sheds light on this question. He tells us that, "Normally the educated pagans of the Roman Empire knew nothing about either Jewish or Christian history. If they wanted some information about the Jews, they picked up second-hand distortions such as we read in Tacitus." Voltaire reserves his scorn for Josephus, obviously for him a wretchedly biased source. But, on the state of Jewish history, Momigliano confirms—irrespectively of Josephus' ground-

breaking work—that "the most historically minded of the ancient nations turned into the one most indifferent to history. … Historical events lost their importance in comparison with the eternal Torah."[23] Similarly, Pierre Vidal-Naquet tells us that, after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, the Jews "invented history as an existential dimension of man in time" and saw it as "a repetition of the past," because "the future, barring some intervention by the messiah, was dead." But he adds eloquently that, "Judaism … organized itself in history in order to survive in spite of history."[24] Thus, across the centuries, Voltaire, Momigliano, and Vidal-Naquet politely nod towards one another in partial agreement about the peculiar state of Jewish history. In Voltaire's case, however, he makes an exception of the Jews in his interpretation of their history as told in the Old Testament; he tends not to cast a similarly critical eye on the mix of fable, myth, and history in other cultures.

If we return to Pascal's *Pensées*, this time to consider his reflections on Figurative Law in the Old Testament,[25] we may find additional reasons for Voltaire's antipathy to the Hebrew Scriptures. Pascal was, after all, one of Voltaire's key antagonists from a previous age.[26] There are, for example, Pascal's apparent admiration for the Hebrew belief in miracles, the typology of first and second comings, and the allusions to hidden meanings. We also find that he points to two interpretative errors, one, to take everything literally, two, to take everything spiritually; that some of the Hebrew passages on the law cannot be reconciled except figuratively, but that not all of them are meant literally or figuratively. There is, to cite one more example, the passage on miracles in the section Figurative Language, in which Pascal said that:

> The Jewish religion … , was formed on the pattern of the Messianic truth, and the Messianic truth was recognized by the Jewish religion which prefigured it. Among the Jews the truth was only figurative; in heaven it is revealed. In the Church it is concealed and recognized by its relationship to the figurative.[27]

Such circumlocutions Voltaire must have rejected as the epitome of uncritical thinking. But, in shutting the door on Pascal's distinctions between the figural and the literal, he closed an opportunity to develop a fresh interpretation of the play of figural and literal elements in the Old Testament and their relationship in working out a coherent historic account of the biblical past.

If Voltaire's single-minded horror of Pascal's religiosity prevented him from contemplating such an interpretation, his dismay over what he believed mistakenly to be Spinoza's avowal of atheism, on the other hand, drove him away from considering the Jewish philosopher's understanding of the Old Testament as a testimony to its uses of prophetic symbolism expressed in poetic language. In Spinoza's words:

> Therefore, to interpret Scriptural miracles and to understand from their accounts how they really took place, one must know the beliefs of those who originally related them and left us written records of them, and one must distinguish between these beliefs and what could have been represented to their senses. Otherwise we shall confuse their beliefs and judgments with the miracle as it really happened. And awareness of their beliefs is of further importance in avoiding confusion between what really happened and what was imagined and was no more than prophetic symbolism. *For many things are related in Scripture as real, and were also believed to be real, but were nevertheless merely symbolical and imaginary . . . Finally for the proper understanding of the reality of miracles, it is important to be acquainted with the diction and metaphors affected by the Hebrews.* He who does not pay sufficient attention to this will ascribe to Scripture many miracles which Scriptural writers never intended as such, thus completely failing to understand not only events and miracles as they really happened but also the meaning of the writers of the Sacred Books (*TTP*, 135–36, my italics).[28]

## Allegory and symbolism in the Old Testament

Spinoza's insistence that miracles as related in the Old Testament should be understood "as they really happened," that is, according to the laws of nature and that one must call on nature to explain the Bible's arcane meanings, finds half an echo in Voltaire's firm conviction that faith in miracles violates mathematic, divine, immutable, and eternal laws ("Miracles," *OC*, 36, 374). Just as meaningful is Spinoza's admonition that what was real and thought to be real must be understood symbolically and imaginatively, and that readers of Scripture must be alive to the poetic language used by its writers. Voltaire was hardly deaf to the uses of poetry in the Bible, and, as well, the power of allegory. He wrote, for example–quite devastatingly—that all the "Jewish savants" thought that the first chapters of Genesis were composed by writers who gave allegoric meaning to original sin, and that it was not a Jewish doctrine, but, on the contrary, the legacy of a "debauched" Augustine, whose life was spent in a series of contradictions ("Péché Originel," *OC*, 36, 423–27). Allegory was very much on his mind when he wrote about the meaning of the thornbush making itself king of all the trees as told in the ninth chapter of Judges ("Fables," *OC*, 36, 100). Despite some of the crude conclusions in his reading of the Book of Job, he conceded that it was another example of an allegoric tale, as was the fable of giants armed against the gods (*OCM*, 11, 140–41). The peoples of the Orient, including the Jews, had long expressed themselves allegorically. Nothing was more natural for people, who had used hieroglyphics to express their thoughts, to continue to speak as they wrote. Allegories verbalized their written thoughts. It was their linguistic extravagance that marked the prophets, Ezekiel foremost among

them. The resulting mystification ("le sens mystique") was not a question that Voltaire wanted to get into; he was principally interested, he wrote, in the fact that allegories abounded in the Bible, and should not be taken seriously. These blind beliefs were derived from hieroglyphics, and were older than history. All moderns could do was to acknowledge that the extraordinary *moeurs* and customs of the ancient peoples of the Near East, as well as those that survived into the modern era, were described allegorically and understood literally, and should, even if wholly alien to modern European standards, not be judged by them (*OCM*, 11, 124–26).

As much anthropologic evidence as was available was important, but the voids would never be filled. Consequently, as important, if not more so, was the near impossibility of recovering the historic truth. The power of language, not its truths, was Voltaire's way of avoiding the contradiction between what he believed were the fantasies of the Old Testament and the power of its poetry. On this point, we meet with a difficulty. A number of his writings may be called upon to see why. Lionel Gossman tells us that when Voltaire considered the nature of truth, he meant by it a sense of the familiar, the legendary and what was held to be "true." Because he wanted to preserve the "truth" of epic poetry, he made no effort to distinguish it from legend. In the *Henriade*, however, he began to distance historic from poetic truth, but he was as concerned with making his histories epic narratives, as he believed he had succeeded in *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, by rendering human motives and interests as faithfully as he could, and that this was more important than achieving factual veracity.[29] In *La Philosophie de l'histoire*, Voltaire is tireless in declaring that the facts of the recent past were one thing, while the facts of a distant and irrecoverable past were another. The ancient Hebrew past was, as it were, the material of legend from the very beginning and could not meet the standards of modern historiography. Neither, it seems, could it satisfy the conditions he set out as the "truths" he granted earlier to ancient epic poetry.

We may see here how, inadvertently, it seems, Voltaire was almost ready to grant, the existence of two kinds of truth, one historic, the other poetic. His review in 1764 of Robert Lowth's book on sacred Hebrew poetry reveals that he was, if not enamored, at least impressed by its beauty.[30] That Lowth preferred to select the more revolting and scabrous passages from the Old Testament was certain, Voltaire stated, but he was nonetheless receptive to the beauty of its poetry, if not the beauty of its message.[31] He did not have anything to say about Lowth's revolutionary theory of semantic parallelism in the poetry, putting it aside to comment on its other aspects. Lowth was wrong to think that the poet's aim is to moralize or instruct. In declaring that the poet's sole purpose is to stimulate the imagination, Voltaire dismissed the didactic aspects of Hebrew poetry by ignoring it as a poetry of prophecy and wisdom. He insisted that poetry is not concerned with truth. The emotions it inspires may captivate people of a later age, even move them strongly, but they must be seen in their historic setting, and in the case

of the early Hebrews, in their simple pastoral existence. He is now, as it were, asking poetry to take a backseat to history, denying it the superiority that Aristotle gave it in the *Poetics*. Poetry, Voltaire writes, exaggerates everything; it stimulates the imagination; it does not calm, it awakens the passions. Nowhere else does he seem so determined to place reason above the imagination than in this critique of Lowth. If the poet achieves the goal of heightening the imagination, he has fulfilled his calling, which is quite distinct from his goal as a good citizen. Like all the sacred languages, for example those of the Athenians and Germanic tribes, ancient Hebrew, from its birth, was closely united with music and had a unique meter which cannot, unfortunately, be recovered. As is true of all oriental languages, it made use of powerful images equally familiar to both poets and their listeners. The sun, for example, was a favorite image, representing the end of suffering and the advent of happiness. God's grandeur and majesty, especially his threats of vengeance, are inspired by images announcing the end of the world: the devouring fires, the winds carried aloft on wings. Jeremiah brings us visions of mountains torn from their foundations; of birds that vanish from the earth; of the firmaments extinguished. The poetry of the ancient Hebrews was also intensely dramatic, as the Book of Job illustrates, which was the chief reason, Lowth said, for composing his lectures. But for Lowth, Hebrew poetry was inseparable from prophecy,[32] while for Voltaire it is the drama of Job's sufferings. The multitude of powerful "*idées*" in the books of the prophets, Voltaire goes on to say, is astonishing. Only the Greeks reached these heights. In Isaiah, the variety and richness of the images, the majesty, profusion, gentleness, the loftiness, and simplicity of the "*ideas*" bear comparison with Homer. Isaiah inspires terror; Jeremiah summons our pity. Isaiah tears at the soul; Jeremiah shows us its tenderness. Ezekiel is bold and vehement; his images bear the imprint of his character. They are repeated each time with greater ardor and indignation. The same poetic qualities, both good and bad, may be found in Aeschylus. Hebrew poetry reflected the pastoral life of the early Jews, and in their sacred books may be found the most striking images of their *moeurs*. The Pentateuch offers a simple description of the different occupations of these first human beings and of their patriarchies, and in it we recognize the naïve voice of nature. Their virtues and vices were as simple as themselves, easily perceived and powerfully expressed.

Voltaire writes of the "sublime" Homer, but does not use the adjective to describe biblical poetry, although he does refer to the sense of terror that it causes. Eric Auerbach's contrast between the Homeric poems and the Old Testament bestows sublimity upon both, but for different reasons. In Homer, the sublime events take place among the ruling class who are preserved from too close contact with daily life. It is in the roots of Hebrew daily life that Voltaire locates the nature of Old Testament poetry, but he does not see beyond its material foundations. For Auerbach, the:

> sublime, tragic, and problematic [in the Old Testament] take shape precisely in the domestic and commonplace. . . . [T]he perpetually smoldering jealousy and the connection between the domestic and the spiritual, between the paternal blessing and the divine blessing, lead to daily life being permeated with the stuff of conflict, often with poison. The sublime influence of God here reaches so deeply into the everyday life that the two realms of the sublime and the everyday are not only actually unseparated but basically inseparable.[33]

In his favorable comments on Hebrew poetry, Voltaire came close to negating the low opinion he had of the horrific events narrated in the Old Testament, but he did not temper his anger with his admiration for its language. He thus preserved both only at the cost of self-contradiction, and must strike one as a way of maintaining an uneasy and dogmatic position. The more important point is that the sacred nature of the text was denied, while the poetry could not be understood without remarking on its intimate connections with the ordinary course of life. Voltaire's "*idées*," as he uses the locution here, were not the same as conceptual thought, but more like a vague notion, or the product of imagination. As an Enlightenment thinker, he gave priority to the second: ideas had the more exalted mission of continuing the progress of establishing truth on a sound philosophic basis. At no point, moreover, does he speak about wisdom, whether in the Bible or in Greek poetry: knowledge and wisdom were tracing separate trajectories.[34]

The "Song of Songs" in the Book of Solomon, Voltaire called a precious morsel handed down from antiquity. "It is the only book of love remaining to us from the Hebrews. . . . Its style resembles all Hebrew works of eloquence. Lacking in continuity, [it is] episodic, repetitive, confused, ridiculously metaphorical; but it contains passages that breathe innocence and love. [C'est le seul livre d'amour qui nous soit resté des Hébreux. . . . Le style est comme celui de tous les ouvrages d'éloquence des Hébreux, sans liaison, sans suite, plein de repetitions, confus, ridiculement métaphorique; mais il y a des endroits qui respirent la naïveté et l'amour]" "Salomon," (*OC*, 36, 514). He was equally enthralled by the story of Joseph, but he almost sentimentalizes it by calling it:

> one of the most precious monuments of antiquity. . . . It appears to be the model for all oriental writers; it is more moving than Homer's *Odyssey*, because a hero who pardons is more touching than one who seeks vengeance. . . . In this history may be found everything that makes an epic poem interesting—[its] exposition, knotty complication, recognition, reversal, and wonder. [L'histoire de Joseph . . . est un des plus précieux monuments de l'antiquité. Elle paraît être le modèle de tous les écrivains orientaux; elle est plus attendrissante que l'Odysée d'Homère; car un héros qui pardonne, est plus touchant que celui qui se venge. . . . [O]n trouve dans cette histoire tout ce qui constitue un poème épique

> intéressant; exposition, noeud, reconnaissance, péripétie, et merveilleux] ("Joseph," *OC*, 36, 254–61).

It is simply a story for Voltaire, nothing more.

His sensitivity to the poetry in Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth or Koheleth,—the sage whose reflections make up the book)—may be gauged from his lyrical rendering in his *Précis de l'Ecclésiaste*, which was published in 1759 (see the introductory remarks in *OCM*, 9, 481–82).[35] But he hardly ignored its other aspects. His opinion of it changed between its publication and his comments in the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, which appeared a few years later. From his selection of texts for the *Précis* from Ecclesiastes, it is possible to conclude that he found much in them that reflected his personal fatigue, disillusionment, pessimism, and futility, even, as I believe, that his interpretation reveals an affinity for some of the darker beliefs in hell that marked Christian doctrine: "The wise and the foolhardy, and the weak and the strong/all are plunged into the same abyss;" "The same field feeds the innocent ewe/and the dreadful tiger that tears its flank/The tomb brings together the beneficent people/and the cruel brigands, drunk from their blood."[36] He departs momentarily from his dedication to the ideals of the Enlightenment as a work in progress, and in one passage returns to his fears of recurrent war, despairing that, "All the misfortunes of our fathers have not enlightened us/We experience the miseries that will strike our sons" and "Nothing on earth is new/What has been seen will be seen again/the dreadful power of war/through which everything is confused/and vice and virtue, faced with claps of thunder."[37] He was much more intent on questioning and rejecting what he called the book's materialism. For him, as we have already noted, the Ecclesiastes sage is a man who confesses that he is no longer deceived by the illusions of grandeur, is tired of pleasure, and sick and weary of science. On every page of the text may be found the thought that the just and the impious are subject to the same accidents of fortune, that man is nothing more than an animal, that it is better not to have been born, that there is no other life, and that there is nothing as good and reasonable as living in peace with the fruits of one's labors with the woman one loves. As we know, because of what may be considered its theme of futility, Ecclesiastes has not always had a secure place in the canon. For Voltaire, its place in it was not an issue. What was important was its Epicureanism and the absence of any allusions to the immortality of the soul. Just as other "revolting" beliefs in the past, Epicureanism had been acceptable in times of ignorance. Now in enlightened times, their absurdity or horror were disguised as allegories, but that was no excuse, he implied, for giving in to them ("Salomon," *OC*, 36, 509–10).

Ecclesiastes is a difficult book. It is, as is the case with Voltaire's own contradictions, internally contradictory; it also seems to challenge Jewish thinking about God. But while futility may be its major theme, it is also reflective and self-conscious about the limits of knowledge and the

consolations of wisdom. Here we may see a point of convergence between the sage of Ferney's sense of reason's limitations and his advice to cultivate one's own garden and the sage of Ecclesiastes. On the one hand:

> Consider God's doing! Who can straighten what He has twisted? So in time of good fortune enjoy the good fortune; and in a time of misfortune, reflect: The one no less than the other was God's doing; consequently, man may find no fault with Him;
>
> (Ecclesiastes, 7:13–14)

and, on the other hand, "A worker's sleep is sweet, whether he has much or little to eat; but the rich man's abundance doesn't let him sleep" (Ecclesiastes 5:12). Voltaire mutes his optimism, as we have often seen, but perhaps the chief reason for his hesitation and his ambiguous responses to Ecclesiastes is that he saw in its theme of recurrence and non-linearity a radical challenge to his whole life's activities as *philosophe* and publicist that, on balance, staked everything on the belief that through the vale of tears life is worth living. Spinoza cut the furrow more deeply, but in a similar spirit. He called on a passage from Ecclesiastes, "He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow," to remark that the truth of the aphorism was its warning to human beings to know both their power and their lack of power so that they "can determine what reason can do and what I cannot do in controlling the emotions." Not ignorance, but knowledge was the necessary path to human nature, its power and its limits. (*Ethics*, 4, Proposition 16, Scholium, pp. 238–39).[38]

In exposing the Old Testament as bad history, a compilation of tales that had been uncritically accepted as truth, Voltaire could not but help encounter again and again a narrative of great complexity, a mixture of the literal and the figurative, a text that he acknowledged demanded interpretation; and he was not modest in offering his own. In his challenges to it as history, he flirted with two approaches, using both to press his objections to it as sacred, but he deployed them without sufficient care, sometimes in opposition to one another, and at other times, tightly twisting them together with the result that we cannot find our bearings. Thus, on the grounds that the ancient Hebrews had written their own history, he argued that we must believe its literal truth. That the Church, which holds the Jews in horror, maintains that God inspired and dictated the books of the Old Testament, however, does not change the historic truth. The horrible events related in Leviticus and Pentateuch are taken literally and construed as true (*OCM*, 11, 104–6). So were the grossest forms of sexuality—from which he recoiled in disgust—of the ancient Jews who followed the Lord's injunctions to multiply as his chosen people. To cite another example, he expresses his horror at the monstrous massacres related in Genesis, Judges and 2 Kings, and is appalled at the lack of moral conscience, which he cannot help but attack through the use of mockery. At the same time, he cannot resist the

impression he wants to leave with his readers, namely, that there is much that any rational person would dismiss as an invention. The effect of this double device is to blunt the biblical narrative's cumulative effect which follows ancient Israel's fragile origins through the vicissitudes that transformed this unstable confederacy of twelve tribes into a monarchy that succeeded in consolidating political power for a brief time. The narrative does have some of the ring of truth, he admits, as we noted, but he knows that the history is uncertain and fully exploits the fact that it rests on nothing outside what is to be found in the biblical narrative itself. So he wants to have it both ways. He presents the numbers killed in internecine Hebrew warfare as pure fiction, ridiculing belief in the omnipotent Hebrew God as the inspiration for such fantasies: why cannot such events be treated in the same way as other ordinary events? At the same time, he seems to accept them as actual events to underline the barbarism of the Hebrew monarchs. And, why, he asks, must one accede to, and find justification for, as the biblical Jews did, an unrelenting punitive divinity? (*OCM*, 11, 118).

The biblical numbers of Hebrews killed are extraordinarily problematic. Deuteronomy Chapter 7, from which he also takes his evidence, does indeed command the Hebrews to destroy the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and the Jebusites—women and children as well as men—is, like the other narratives, Hebrew as well as, in general, Near Eastern ones, impossible to verify archaeologically. Moreover, the diverse authorship of these books and their contradictions have hardly been overlooked, as, for example, in a recent assessment by Michael Walzer. His suggestive essay points to the need to compare different parts of Deuteronomy and other biblical texts in order to consider whether total annihilation or limited war was pursued. He concludes that the two policies were likely joined, that no unqualified argument for either can be made, and that the writers of Deuteronomy were not capable of criticizing their own people and showed no feelings for their enemies.[39] But Voltaire spends little time on the narrative as the product of centuries of transmission and redaction—the core of Deuteronomy was probably written in the seventh century BCE, some six centuries after the events described—although he does argue elsewhere that the Pentateuch was relatively new and entirely derivative, and parasitic, borrowing from a host of oriental religions ("Job," *OC*, 36, 250–51).

What is more—if we take into account another aspect of biblical interpretation—he only occasionally acknowledges that allegorical meaning plays a part in yielding up some of the mysteries of the biblical labyrinth and myth. Thus, his reading is not always fair; it is not proportionate. It does not work out an algorithm for the complex relationship between the literal and the figurative.[40] The uses of allegory are difficult to disentangle from literal and historic readings. Biblical interpretation cannot do without what Robert Alter calls the *sensus historicus*. In his view, all narratives claiming to be historic present details as they "really" occurred, but that does not prevent the writer from drawing out their symbolic meaning.

Furthermore, the figurative readings must nourish themselves on the literal: they coexist. "[I]t is the literal," he concludes, "that creates the potential of narrative to mean many things."[41]

Voltaire's great error in his reading of the Bible adds up to a loss of clear judgment and imagination, amounting to an incapacity to probe and enter into the mysteries of the biblical texts. In the passages that we have just cited, Voltaire shows some sensitivity to the humanity of key biblical figures, and the language in which it is so eloquently expressed clearly captivates him. But, by placing them both within a narrowly literal historic frame, he immobilized them and refused them "transhistorical" candidacy outside the biblical canon, which, Robert Alter says, does not have "a single, authoritative meaning, however much the established spokesmen for the canon at any moment may claim that is the case."[42] Aesthetics, as a means of transforming the particular into the universal, of rousing readers of the Bible from its particularities of place and time—from its historic roots—to contemplate and reimagine their own juxtaposed lives, did not come easily to Voltaire. He went only part of the way, and stuck too closely to his agenda. We may now see more clearly that he did not feel obliged, despite his campaign against a single authoritative reading, to take sufficient account of contemporary readings other than his own.

To be sure, the range of biblical interpretation was not nearly as extensive in France, as it was in England and Germany, though Voltaire, as we mentioned earlier, drew on such scholars as Richard Simon, who was one of the key sources for German scholarship in the following century, where the Bible proved fertile ground for the interpretative skills and translations that transformed and reconstructed it for a secular age, down to the time of Herder, who, in the words of Jonathan Sheehan, "pushed beyond artistry and pure aesthetics into the politics of national literature."[43] There was, of course, a great distance between Voltaire's and Herder's vision of the elements of a national literature; the former could never have seen the Bible as part of French letters and aesthetics. The repudiation of the Bible in one Enlightenment culture, and its appropriation in another to make it—minus its Old Testament theologic trappings—part of German national heritage, strangely brings into high relief the fact that both cultures overturned the notion that it could serve as a template for universal human aspirations. Its place was instead taken by Greek and Roman culture. This development was not lost on the *maskalim*, particularly Mendelssohn who was presented with the problem of preserving the integrity and uniqueness of the Jewish Bible, while clinging to the expectation that Jews could become part of German secular life. Voltaire admired the poetry in the Old Testament as a precious relic of the past, in the same way as he looked at the literary relics of the Greek past, but he stretched more towards an admiration of the latter. He refused to grant the Bible authority of any kind, unlike German translators and commentators who were not, as Voltaire was, adamant in fighting against Catholic dogma.

Concerned to put to rest what he deems to be a common misapprehension that eighteenth century French biblical scholarship and Jewish interpretation of the Bible were incompatible, Bertram Schwarzenbach declares that, "The Enlightenment did not speak with one voice on the Bible."[44] Indeed, this is so. But the many voices were not as easily heard in France as they were in Protestant countries where there was, since the time of the Reformers, a long history of biblical exegesis. With the French expulsion of the Huguenots, who became important contributors to biblical criticism in the Protestant states that welcomed them, France lost its Protestant exegetes, even if books by them circulated there. It consequently tended to be more one-sided, fierce and oppositional in what was seen as the need to be constantly vigilant in confrontations with the official guardians of the state bureaucracy, the *parlements*, and the massive weight of the Catholic organs of academic and ecclesiastical opinion.

To say this is not to deny the fact yet once again that Judaism as a religion was not in Voltaire's time—and this is even more so today—regarded by all Jews as a body of transparent beliefs and practices that did not require interpretation. But the question of rabbinic interpretation was well within the bounds of a shared consensus about the centrality of the Old Testament. The reach and the limitations imposed on interpretation of the texts did not find agreement among Jews who nevertheless continued to view it as the core of Judaism. Spinoza, in his time, adduced several arguments to point out the difficulties of textual interpretation, including the structure of the Hebrew language, but just as significantly, it was the near impossibility of recovering the history of the Bible's authorship that was the most bedeviling factor. This did not render interpretation a vain enterprise; it was unavoidable. He was sympathetic to the endeavor, and showed that he differed, for example, with Maimonides whose method he said was of no value, because, while he claimed that the true meaning of Scripture cannot diverge from or be contrary to reason, Maimonides placed it firmly and, Spinoza insisted, unjustly, in the hands of the learned and removed it from the common people, endowing it with the status of philosophy, which, as theology, it could not have. But Maimonides also said, we might recall, that when biblical passages conflict with demonstrated truth, interpreters should call on the figurative to extract their meaning.[45] Spinoza was not unsympathetic; still he came back to the argument that the Bible was not meant for philosophic and scientific minds, but was in fact directed towards, and was capable of being understood by the common people (*TTP*, see esp. Ch. 7). Leaving that last question aside, Edward Breuer claims that Spinoza was not as concerned with interpretative problems as he was in demolishing the Old Testament's authority, while Hava Tirosh-Samuelson tells us that, even if Spinoza were determined to shoot it down as a divinely revealed text, human interpretation was still required to make it accessible.[46] For Cynthia Ozick, interpretation of the Old Testament is not intended to displace, or to be discontinuous from the Scriptures: Judaism rests on the idea of a

beginning—a point of origin—and the transmission of God's majesty and power from generation to generation must be seen as "a continuum of truth" that is vital to its inner strength: "[T]ransmittal signifies the carrying-over of the original strength, the primal monotheistic insight, the force of which drowns out competing power systems."[47]

Voltaire would certainly have considered the very notion of a "continuum of truth" a theologic conceit, one that would have been precisely the cardinal reason for studying and rejecting the privileged status of the Old Testament. It remained fixed in its claims to universality, and had, therefore, to be reduced to its proper place in history. A century after Spinoza, who was the first to attack what was putatively one of Judaism's impregnable notions—that of election—Voltaire obdurately stood his ground, taking some pleasure in noting that rabbinic tradition was in fact steeped in the art of argument and dispute that was cultivated to preserve the authority of the Bible against interpretations extraneous to it and defined and examined within its own terms. He surely took some pleasure, even if he could not have agreed with Richard Simon's opening declaration that, "There is no one, Jew or Christian, who does not recognize that these Scriptures were the pure language of God," with Simon's accompanying observation that:

> since men were the guardians of the sacred book, indeed of all other books too, and since the first originals have been lost, it is in all ways impossible that there have not been many changes, as much because of the length of time as by the negligence of copyists.[48]

Just as there were instances of rabbinic resistance to interpretations dislodging the authoritative readings of the stories in the Scriptures and giving them the status of a "disembodied image," as Eric Auerbach writes,[49] so, in his own resistance to its beguiling nature, Voltaire perversely did the opposite. For him the image was embodied in one time and in one place that held him in its grasp as an inexpungable feature of Judaism. The image was not in fact impervious to interpretation, only its method and purpose were. With "too great a change in the environment and through the awakening of a critical consciousness," Auerbach commonsensically argues that, "the Biblical claim to absolute authority is jeopardized; the method of interpretation is scorned and rejected, [and] the Biblical stories become ancient legends."[50] That aim fits Voltaire's near demolition of the Old Testament. But he could not have sharpened his weapons without the foundations laid down by critics like Simon, who published his work not so many years before the expulsion of the Huguenots and used the term "critique," before the appearance of Bayle's *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, and before Simon, there was of course Spinoza.[51] Again, by turning to Spinoza who deals with the way in which the notion of "a chosen people" might be interpreted (of course he adduces other examples), we find that he deflates it. By explaining it as a device by Moses to frighten the people into obedience,

Spinoza states that, if God chose them, it was for their social organization, not for their understanding and spiritual qualities. "In other respects they were not different from other nations, and God was equally gracious to all" (*TTP*, Ch. 3, pp. 89–91. See also, pp. 92–100). He thereby issued a challenge to one of the Old Testament's founding beliefs, and did so on the grounds that philosophy was a better guide to truth than theology, and that the two should travel along separate paths. Although Voltaire's goal was similarly to elevate philosophy and downgrade theology, he did in fact depart—contrary to Reinhart Koselleck's claim—from "the scientific postulate of non-partisanship in the sense of non-adherence to party."[52] If his goal was to strengthen the "party of humanity," a party that transcends all partisan bias, we may say that he adhered to the postulate. All the same, it cannot be seen in the same light as Bayle's credo that the critic must be a non-partisan scholar who serves only reason. Voltaire was a publicist first of all and a philosopher second.

It may be argued that Spinoza did not succeed totally either. By allowing that individuals will read Scripture because they see it a source of morality, he admitted that there was a problem in how to address the indivisibility of authority—the authority of philosophy and science and the authority that each individual possesses in his person to choose his moral beliefs; and, as we saw, this was, in his view, a right every individual had. He appears not to have solved it, for as he put it teasingly, if human beings accept the fundamental principle of theology:

> that men be saved simply by obedience, we may also be asked why it is that we believe it. If men do so without reasoning, that is, blindly, they act foolishly, but if such a principle can be proved by reason, theology remains a part of philosophy.

But Spinoza held that the natural light of reason cannot investigate the principle, "or at least that nobody has been successful in proving it, and that therefore it was essential that there should be revelation" (*TTP*, p. 253). The struggle is not between two truths, the truth of philosophy and the truth of theology. Truth lay in the domain of the first, while moral motivation lay in the second. Voltaire did not trouble himself with such philosophic arguments. He directed his shafts at Scripture as a collection of stories and plainly believed that the uses of reason were largely unproblematic. In the eighteenth century and in the centuries that followed, Jews, who refused to follow Spinoza in substituting the authority of philosophy and reason, albeit, as we have seen, he did so with important qualifications, for the authority of Scripture, carried on the work of interpreting the notion of election in ways that would not place it in conflict with the ideals of reason and human betterment—proof of the way in which Judaism, as some modern scholars suggest, bent its efforts to absorb the views of a culture other than its own and which they believed could lead to the opening up of the latter.[53]

Voltaire disputed and rejected the truths of the Bible when it suited his argument, and fell back on them for the same reason. He mocked those who saw them as indispensable to any interpretation worthy of the name, specifically, one that would avoid the errors of simplification, which Auerbach pointed out was manifestly one of Voltaire's weaknesses. There were also available to him other treatments, as well. Bayle's, for example, looked at the Scriptural texts as a record of how the Hebrews came to adopt rules that were consonant with their needs as social beings in a specific economic and political environment. And, how—perhaps this was even more important—the authors of the Old Testament composed a record of the ways in which the Israelites understood their relationship to God, and conversely, how it could be read as how God saw himself in relationship to them.[54] Voltaire set aside any thought that the Old Testament was a work of moral grandeur, a story of God whose presences and absences could be a constant source of passion, perplexity, and faith in the life of a people.[55] Belief in divine anger and divine judgment were doubtless necessary in an earlier stage of history; it was time to leave it behind. But he seemed too eager to ridicule them, to make them objects of satire, to demonstrate time and time again how the ancient Hebrews reveled in superstition, and recoiled in terror from God's vengeance and unreason. The critic of fables posing as history was ironically the creator of his own fable in *Candide*, which he set in a dubious historic context, about Western and non-Western civilizations. It parallels the satiric barbs in the *Dictionnaire*. And, though both are of a different genre than his more serious *Essai sur les moeurs*, there are parallels uniting all three–the *conte*, the philosophic, and the historic.

## More the polemicist than the historian

Voltaire's attempt to separate myth, legends, fable, and history is therefore only a partial success. It also ignores the ways in which dating the Old Testament is itself a hazardous enterprise. The best expert opinion tells us, for example, that "the Pentateuch in its manifold richness took shape over a long period of time. It preserves not only the tones that reverberated in the Mosaic period, but the overtones of meaning perceived by subsequent generations"[56] It was, in fact, like all of Voltaire's examples—including the histories of Herodotus, Polybius, Diodorus of Sicily, and Gregory of Tours—written in different periods after the events described. The Old Testament incorporated myth and cannot be understood apart from it, but for Voltaire it appears to be mostly fable and deserves to be discredited as such. It could not have been easy for him to imagine how it could be approached otherwise, or how reason and Judaism, which in its contemporary forms he did not distinguish from its sclerotic biblical roots, could possibly be related except negatively. Leo Strauss is another thinker who reminds us that the Old Testament contains both myth and history, and that:

> From the point of view of the Bible the 'myths' are as true as the 'histories'. What is now called historic is those deeds and speeches that are equally accessible to the believer and the unbeliever. But from the point of view of the Bible, the unbeliever is the fool who has said in his heart 'there is no God'; the Bible narrates everything as it is credible to the wise in the biblical sense of wisdom. Let us never forget that there is no biblical word for doubt.[57]

Believers and unbelievers would find it hard to disagree, however, with the idea that the Jewish Bible, mixing myth and history, might be best described as typology in which "events are made to reflect, anticipate, and explain each other." The return from exile in Babylonia is depicted as a second exodus from Egypt, and, in turn, it evokes the creation. It is not the unique in history, but rather history as a repository of recurrent patterns, that distinguishes the Jewish Bible as history and religion.[58]

Voltaire's world of Jews was surely an important part of his struggle against the Church's doctrines and institutions. Yet it is much more. He did not regard their past as a mere episode to be inserted in a general work on the rise and fall of various cultures. It informs his concept of history, as it was accorded sacred meaning and it was his mission as a historian, whose goal he conflated with his mission as a philosopher, to unravel the threads of a myth that was responsible for so much error. In the name of reason, he transformed his philosophic history into an ideologic weapon against the fables and religions that enslaved human beings in the past and continue to do so in the present, however much he understood them as a response to the fear of hunger and death by an unforgiving nature and marauding people. He deplored organized religion's exploitation of those fears to consolidate its temporal and spiritual power. He noted as well that some cultures in different parts of the globe survive, while others vanish; why some do not advance beyond the aboriginal state, while others that have made great leaps for centuries reach stasis and decline. Into this panorama, he made room for the Jews as they rose from their tribal existence and were eventually dispersed into exile in Asia, Africa, and Europe. Their survival was a puzzle. These little bands separated themselves from their neighbors and embraced monotheism. This was not unique to the Jews. Other cultures had taken that path as well. It was a monotheism that weathered disputes on intricate points of the laws of the Old Testament and more abstruse questions, such as the soul's immortality and the existence of an afterlife.

How did Voltaire explain what he recognized must be a singular phenomenon? Since the time of Vespasian, post-biblical Jews had no land of their own except for some villages in the Arabian desert near the Red Sea. And, since the time of Mohammed, "they have truly ceased to constitute a body of people [ils ont cessé réellement de composer un corps de people]" (*OCM*, 11 121). He could not attribute their survival to their chosenness, for this was a belief that he totally rejected, nor, following the Christian

view, that God had rejected them. Neither did he adduce Gentile hostility as a sufficient or proximate cause. In singling out social and economic causes, he chose what he believed was a solidly historic explanation, rather than a non-natural or a psychologic one. This did not moderate or soften his negative judgment. Their survival was owing, he said, to their penetration into the margins of society as a people that could serve their host societies, mainly, Voltaire said tirelessly, but *ad nauseam*, as money lenders. He detested this base and ignoble activity. He despised even more Jewish arrogance, pride, and their self-exaltation as the chosen people. No people could have been singled out by divine decree, let alone from a God that demanded so much and undeservedly received—though with significant lapses—their devotion. Such a people had abjectly surrendered to this most willful and most cruel of deities. For him, this was the crowning insult to reason, but he always added the caveat that the Jews of the Old Testament were also bound by laws and customs peculiar to their culture. Their imperviousness to reason, which endured in the Church's message of humility, suffering, and violence, all of them needless, gratuitous, and obscene, was their permanent and harmful legacy. By peeling back Scripture's several protective layers and exposing it to the light of reason, he would show that it was hollow at the center.

His treatment of the Jews pulls them part of the way back into history, but only at the price of simplifying them, so much so, that they appear to slip away from, and do not seem to be situated in, it. At times, as in his references to ancient Hebrew sects, such as the Pharisees and Essenes, he is sensitive to their differences, but he is equally comfortable in presenting an undifferentiated Jewishness lasting through thousands of years. He relaxed his contempt at one point, reflecting how a people that had suffered such enormous losses survived. It was their God's disapproval and punishment that made them so different, and they could not be understood and judged as other peoples were (*OCM*, 11 118). He certainly had more than a simple inkling that the Old Testament abounded in contradictions, that, for example, the Jews struggled to preserve their faith in God, yet turned away from him with a grieving sense of injury, only to be confronted by prophets heralding his power and burdening them with guilt and repentance. Scripture is untidy. Voltaire's world of Jews is untidy as well, but it is also an untidy and unhistoric world of timelessness, even while he seeks to bring the discipline of historic time to them. The paradox is that his quest for the Jewish presence in a time-centered history does not restore them to it, because, while he believed that their "true" history was irrecoverable, he found himself unable to think that the Old Testament met the standards of historiography. These include, in fact, as Momigliano points out, notions of time, memory and, as well, the fact that Hebrew historians believed that they had reliable evidence for some of the happenings told in the Old Testament.[59] Voltaire leaves the Jews in suspended animation outside time, paralleling how some Jews see their relationship to a timeless God who transcends history, but

who are, all the same, self-conscious of their history. Determined to show that fables are the product of time, but must be seen as the antithesis of history, he questioned but did not destroy the myth that remained for him the greatest myth of all, a myth whose proportions eluded him and for which he had no sympathy.

Voltaire's understanding of Jews was almost totally embedded in the rational and common sense context of the French Enlightenment; and it was within and according to its terms that they would find their way to a better world.[60] He consistently thought of them as a historically peripheral and marginalized people, who were therefore rightly ostracized. His relations with them, it turns out, were, even as he devoted so much of his energy to putting them in their "rightful" place in his larger scheme of history, few and impermanent. For a man who imagined so many different worlds, his keen mind lacked the imagination to enter theirs and to see how they were faring in the new circumstances of unprecedented open inquiry. It is sad and disappointing that he did not stretch his mind to expand his vision and bring them more thoughtfully into it.

Enlightened rationality in and of itself was the basis of Voltaire's universalism, and the high road along which he plotted his journey through the mirage of religion and unenlightened self-interest. This is what it meant to be a philosopher—leading and educating human beings who could be expected in time to affirm the superiority of universal over particular values, to see that their authentic good was to be found by embracing the first and giving up the second. Looking ahead to the debate on these issues in the next two centuries, we may see in this prescription a source of conflict between three sides of the liberal ideal: one that stresses individual autonomy; a second that seeks to limit it by paying heed to the demands of a particular group; and a third that stresses loyalty to humanity writ large.

Contrary to the high expectations that the power of reason would create the conditions of an enlightened world, as an ideal it proved to be a less than a perfect instrument of liberation, including the liberation of Jews from anti-Semitism. Almost from its inception, reason, in Voltaire's mind, was seen as a weapon against dogma and obscurantism. Determined to overturn sacred myths, he set down the foundations for another set of myths and semi-myths about the nature of Jewish accommodations to the modern secular world. Emancipation, to be sure, was the goal for which key figures of the Enlightenment strove, but they tended, Voltaire perhaps most of all, to lose sight of Jewish situatedness in the world. Just as his notion of reason was abstract and disembodied, so was his imaginary future of human beings freed at last from the prison of myths. The idea was to have the Jews move from a self-invented world to a world ruled by reason, and to join with other reasonable human beings in creating a demythologized society. This was a very different role from the one that Spinoza gave to reason, not because he questioned its emancipatory function, but because he saw it as a cognitive faculty that was the condition of knowing God's immanence. Bayle, too—

even as he has been called the arsenal of the Enlightenment—had profound doubts about the uses of reason, going so far as to ask how one might conceive the structure of a rational world. In his moments of candor, Voltaire revealed his own skepticism. He was not reluctant to call into doubt the power of pure reason, but he did so playfully and did not move confidently into the question of how some minds made gargantuan efforts to find a *modus vivendi* between faith and reason. He turned adamantly away from both institutionalized forms of, and high-minded appeals to, religious revelation. One might say that like Bayle, but much less than Spinoza, Voltaire was a man without religious feeling and could not see why anyone living in a world that was by all accounts becoming more civil would desire to make religion the center of life.

Voltaire was inspired by a vision of humanity not beholden to unexamined beliefs and practices. The tensions between particularism and universalism impinge hardly or not at all on the consciousness and concerns of the custodians of a pristine Judaism, embedded in Scripture. However, the exact contours defining each and transcending both color the thoughts of secular Jews who desire to see in Judaism a universalist ethic, much as Ernst Cassirer believed it did, but wish to bring it closer to a cosmopolitan ideal—an ideal which they cautiously see as a foundation upon which a decent society might be built. Purging cosmopolitanism of its negative anti-Semitic connotations, which identified it with the danger zones of rootlessness, and championing it as a social norm would, so the argument goes, overcome the false choices that were so emotionally damaging to Jews who tried to escape their particularism and distinctiveness through assimilation. But is cosmopolitanism, either as a concept or as a practical reality, a better and fuller answer than universalism? It may in fact be universalism in new dress and not so much a superior substitute for it, but a different version that may be comforting yet almost as fraught with the same tensions.[61]

## Rousseau as a counter-example

To gain a firmer grasp of the problem, we can do no better than to turn to Rousseau whose portrayal of the Jews was not only sympathetic but also generally positive, and whose understanding of the complex strands that make up group and tribal loyalties was greater. This will enable us to see, first, what we can derive from his political theory that might point in the direction of universalism, and, second, how he viewed the prospect of cosmopolitanism. Rousseau did not have the Jews in mind when he distinguished between the laws that governed a particular society and the natural law that governed nations. He assumed that the development of civil and political society needed a homogeneous population as its basis—homogeneous in the strict sense of a people who prepare themselves, and are prepared by the legislator, to take on the artificial or "foreign" force of the law that would free them.[62] If he took note of particular wills, he was

thinking of a pre-rational society when human beings did not yet understand that their freedom as citizens rested on their free consent to fulfill obligations to the social and political body that would enlarge it. The founder of a people must take away their natural forces and give them in return the forces of a "partial and moral existence," but these will prove to be of no avail if they do not act together to help one another. Only if the acquired forces are equal or superior to the sum of all individual natural forces can the laws be effective. No specific or particular group is to be favored. By partial analogy, in exchange for such enhanced freedom, and as important, if not more so, to ensure to citizens the protection of the state, Jews would be obliged—just as others who bound themselves to adhere to the same laws—to be citizens before being Jewish. But was it Rousseau's intention to put naught to Jewish particularism? The answer is not at first as clear as one could wish. In his few thoughts on the Jews, he remarked on their capacity for survival in a hostile world. Echoing others, including Pascal, the Mosaic Law kept them alive, he believed:

> Zion, destroyed, did not lose hers (her children); they are preserved, they multiply, spread throughout the world, and always recognize each other. They mingle among all peoples and never become confounded with them. They no longer have leaders, and are still a people; they no longer have a fatherland, and are still citizens.

In this political fragment, Rousseau seems to trail away from the subject of Jewish eligibility for citizenship in his imagined political society. In another fragment, he asks his imaginary Hebrew why he puts up with the persecutions he is made to suffer:

> What are you doing among us, O Hebrew. It gives me pleasure to see you here, but how can you enjoy being here, you who scorned us so; why didn't you stay among your own people?

The Hebrew provides an answer, hopeful but vague:

> You are mistaken. I come among my own kind. I lived alone on earth; in the bosom of a numerous people, I was alone. Lycurgus, Solon, Numa are my brothers. I come to rejoin my family. I come to taste at last the sweetness of conversing with my fellows, of talking and being understood. It is in your midst, illustrious souls, that I come at last to find my pleasure.[63]

To which the Hebrew's interlocutor replies: "You have greatly changed your tone, sentiments, and ideas . . . " But at this point the fragment trails off. The last sentence appears to be Rousseau's rejoinder, suggesting that Jews were, in his view, tired of "living alone," and at last ready to join the other members of

the human family. It does not categorically suggest, however, that Rousseau had in mind the end of Jewish beliefs and Jewish adherence to the Mosaic Law. This much he makes clear in the *Social Contract:*

> The Jewish law, which is still in existence, and the law of the son of Ishmael, which has ruled over half the world for ten centuries, still bears witness today to the great men who formulated them. And whereas proud philosophy or blind partisan spirit regards them merely as lucky imposters, the true political thinker admires in their institutions that great and powerful genius which presides over lasting establishments.[64]

The true political thinker, Rousseau states, is the man who recognizes that "at the origin of nations, one [religion] serves as an instrument of the other [politics]."[65] There would apparently be no special place set aside for Jews, no exceptions to the general will; but neither would there be exclusions on account of their religious origins and the specificity of the Mosaic Law. All—Jews and non-Jews—would be treated as citizens. Religious diversity need not be inimical to, or destructive of, the general will. Indeed, there is no hint that Rousseau's state demanded a single linguistic or ethnic identity from its citizens. The final thoughts in the *Social Contract* are instructive. There is no valid distinction between civil and theologic intolerance. They are inseparable. Wherever the latter exists, it produces an effect on the citizens. When that happens, the Sovereign (the people) tolerate all those religions that tolerate others insofar as their dogmas are in no way contrary to the duties of the Citizens. [66] Thus, in his political theology, "A purely civil profession of faith," would be composed of "the articles of which are for the Sovereign to establish, not exactly as religious dogmas, but as sentiments of sociability without which it is impossible to be a good Citizen or a faithful subject."[67] There seemed thus to be nothing in the Mosaic Law to stand in the way of Jewish participation in the life of the social and political body. But it could not claim special status: professions of faith could not be allowed to supersede the civil religion devoted to enlarging the precepts of sociability. Moreover, with an end to the privileged position bestowed upon Christian dogmas, the persecutions of the Jews would end, for the history of intolerance of Jews was, with one exception, dating from the time of the Babylonian captivity and the kings of Syria, a history of Christian intolerance.[68] Sociability, born of an impartial civil religion, was as close as Rousseau got to a notion of universalism. Even if it was not identical to it, sociability was both an ongoing process and a goal in which all could share as men and citizens. Rousseau's sociability was most decidedly not Voltaire's—the sociability produced by great minds in the sciences and geniuses in the arts, knowable only to the privileged few, the intellectuals, the *gens de lettres*, seduced by sophistry and celebrity, as Rousseau would have it, and serving the power of illegitimate monarchs.

It was when Rousseau wrote about relations between nations that he raised the subject of cosmopolitanism. The question demanded first of all a discussion of the term "human race." He supposed it to be a moral person with a universal motivation, which he defined as a feeling of common existence and humanity that bound its members as one. As such it was activated by natural law; however, there was a catch. Because existing society enhanced private interests, it actually subverted humanity by neglecting the problem of how to deal with human passions, and by failing to see that "the law of reason" dictates how the natural law should be conceived. The result was a society driven by private concerns and oblivious of humanity.[69] With this in mind, Rousseau asked if the average person was capable of using his reason to overcome his private passions. By this route, he declared firmly that human beings:

> conceive of the general society on the basis of our particular societies; the establishment of small republics makes us think about the large one, and we do not really become men until after we have been Citizens. It is apparent from this what should be thought of those supposed Cosmopolites who, justifying their love of the fatherland by means of their love of the human race, boast of loving everyone in order to have the right to love no one.[70]

Commerce, upon which he looked unfavorably—neglecting all or nearly all of its benefits—while as we saw, Voltaire posited it as the likeliest foundation for international peace, was purchased at the price of natural compassion; the sense of primitive pity that humans felt for others suffered severe challenges in such a civilization. Rousseau conceded that the expansion of commerce kept nations in some sort of order. That was its only virtue—the virtue by means of which nations existed uneasily alongside one another.[71] But it was not a basis for a peaceful universal order. Only a "few great cosmopolitan souls," he said in the earlier *Discourse on Inequality*, "cross the imaginary barriers that separate people, and following the example of the Sovereign Being who created them, include the whole human race in their benevolence."[72] It was on a smaller scale that the ever-present curse of inequality might be contained by government. It could at best be mitigated in his Spartan utopia, where he argued that the patriot is the feeling human being as opposed to the unfeeling cosmopolitan philosopher.[73] For Rousseau, commerce was the source of luxurious living, artifice, and *amour-propre*. His constitution for Poland singled out cosmopolitan financiers and businessmen who would destroy Polish autonomy.[74] Commerce was not only a divisive force in any existing civil society; it also divided competing civil societies in the world economy and, hence, was a source of chronic instability. It was also the origin of human treachery and evil. It was from its pernicious power that Rousseau recoiled and thought his way back to a supposedly simple social life—and, of course, an irrecoverable one—and his

way forward to an equally utopian solution for humanity. The humanity Rousseau dreamt of had the marks of benevolent cosmopolitanism, but he was not at all sanguine about its prospects in the modern or any other world. It was hard enough for people sharing a common stock of ideas and prejudices, fears and anxieties, and homicidal tendencies to recognize the immense efforts needed to recognize their common interests.[75] It was not reason alone that could be counted on, as it was for Voltaire, nor was it the most important source of human motivation and change, but the heart that moves reason which lies at the center of Rousseau's social compact. These questions will be explored in the next chapter within the context of a Europe that became a battleground between supporters and opponents of the Enlightenment in which politically emancipated Jews faced the choice between assimilation and non-assimilation.

# Part II

# 6 French Judaism reinvented and the Enlightenment disputed

Standing at the beginning of this study, and acting as its foundation, is the curious conjunction of Voltaire and a stubborn Jewish presence, which he confronted in a highly aggressive way. We have traveled a great distance in time from Voltaire's *Treatise on Tolerance* to Michael Walzer's *On Toleration*,[1] from a pre-liberal and pre-democratic world to a world that, at least in its Western parts, congratulates its liberal democratic self on leaving behind some of the most egregious examples of state and clerical power. More important is the way in which, from Voltaire's time to our own, discussion of difference, whether of religion or race, may, without overlooking cultural and political change, find antecedents in the objections Voltaire made against arbitrary power and religious zeal. Voltaire's lengthy travels into history and early anthropology are, however, largely left unread and untended, except among Voltaire specialists. His world of Jews and his Enlightenment may be studied for the light on how the "Jewish Question" may be seen in our own time. Voltaire's importance is not confined to the academy, but his renown in the popular imagination rests principally on his masterpiece, *Candide*, a few of his other *contes*, the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, as well as the *Treatise on Tolerance*. These works explain his importance and justly bring him back more fully to the realm of the living, and acknowledge him as the thinker who set in motion some of the key ideas that are at the center of the continuing debate on what might be called, "Where do we go from here now that we have had an Enlightenment?" Or, to put it differently, are we still living in an age of enlightenment if only because we are not living in an enlightened age?[2] This question lies behind René Pomeau's and Haydn Mason's tributes to Voltaire in 1994 marking the three-hundredth anniversary of his birth.[3] Most of all, they seek to remind us of how his skeptical mind and passionate outrage bore on religious fanaticism and the slaughters it condoned, and how he might have reacted to the unanticipated resumption—this time on a vaster scale and a wider compass—of clerical obscurantism and fundamentalism that seems to have found new life among major religious confessions.

Neither Pomeau nor Mason, however, has paused to ask what Voltaire might have said in the face of Auschwitz, which may be justifiably

considered to be one of the central facts of World War II, the most appalling and frightening instance of another species of fanaticism, born of a new kind of religious fervor, kept ablaze by resentment, envy, greed, and an impoverished sense of self-respect disguised as heroism that asked its acolytes for self-sacrifice and justified the killing of others. To be sure, Voltaire admonished his readers to try to know the other, to recognize people living in the non-Western parts of the globe, who speak "in a thousand different but equal languages, from Siam to California" (*TT*, p. 93). Two facts may be gleaned from his call for tolerance. The first is that we should not ignore the forces ranged against his nascent liberalism that were to be mobilized by an anti- or counter-Enlightenment offensive attacking the principles he and his fellow *philosophes* championed. The second is that he also had serious misgivings about, and failed to encompass, as I have argued, the Jews who were part of Europe and a wider world; but who, in his view, were strangers to its achievements and loftiest aspirations. In this regard, his myopia is not simply a matter of a deeply held prejudice. It goes to the heart of his plea for tolerance. For if anti-Semitism was embedded in the world view of spokesmen for the counter-Enlightenment, it also alarmingly found a home, not in isolated bits of Voltaire's *oeuvre* but in at least, as we saw, two of his more extended works. Paradoxically, Jews, who had good cause to challenge Voltaire's slights of hand, went on to celebrate the Enlightenment and those who spoke for it during the French Revolution as the instrument of their emancipation.

Thus, however much Voltaire appears from our vantage point to have lived in a more innocent age, he is not a frozen classic, nor a vanishing reference point. His ideas are still seen as a starting point for partisans and enemies on either side of the Enlightenment divide. The great debate that they initiated is a significant marker of what lay behind the darkest and bloodiest episodes of twentieth century European history. The answer to how we may move from the eighteenth century to our own time rests, as I will try to show in this Chapter, on how a figure identified with a crucial intellectual shift in European thought, but whose influence has waned since his death, carries importance for people of another time. All the same, we must be conscious, as we look at the responses of Jews and others, of the different levels of historic awareness.

## The aftermath of French emancipation

The movement leading to toleration of Jews and their civil and political emancipation did not emerge as a full and vigorous child of the Enlightenment. It struggled to stay alive in the beginning, but soon, in the Western parts of Europe most affected by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, it made enormous strides. The same cannot be said about the movement in those parts of Europe, little affected by the Enlightenment, such as in the Slavic lands, where the vastly greater number of Jews retained

their traditions, spoke Yiddish as their daily language, and suffered from official restrictions of various kinds, as in the Russian Empire where they were mainly confined to the Pale of Settlement. At the start, even in Western Europe, it was more of an afterthought than an intrinsic part of the Enlightenment. Jews, in their ancient garb, had for some time been the subjects of biblical criticism, and, as one of its unexpected byproducts, they became, not in any truly critical sense, a subject of some curiosity that linked them to a distant past and yet, at the same time, saw them as its pitiful descendants. This marked the feeble beginning of a shift in Jewish and non-Jewish mentalities. Awareness of their contemporary status, whether in their separate communities or in the positions assigned to them by the state, did not weigh heavily on the public conscience until much later. It broke through the mental calculations and cultural biases of the non-Jewish population, only sporadically and with difficulty. Neither did their condition elicit much sustained response from the active enlightened community. Memories of ancient anti-Jewish animosity and the more recent manifestations of anti-Semitic feelings in the nineteenth century lay side by side, as it were, and together they were used to construct a shield to protect Jews from any shifts or reversals in state policies that were opening up opportunities to the wider world. As well, anti-Jewish outbursts of popular violence remained deeply embedded in Jewish memories.

At the same time, it is easy, but misleading, to bury the conditions of Jews in post-Enlightenment and post-Revolutionary Europe in a context of eternal anti-Semitism that knows no temporal and geographic boundaries, extending from early Christian times to the present.[4] Just as it would be mistaken to assign Voltaire's ideas a timeless quality, shorn of their deeper temporal contexts, so we must not forget that his image of a timeless Judaism that has, for some, as its counter-image, a timeless anti-Semitism, has suffered the relentlessness of time's passage. Such an image conjures up an image of Jew and non-Jew, forever hostile, forever irreconcilable. It short-circuits the reality of events. For however fragile and slow-paced Jewish emancipation and assimilation were, they marked a distinct departure from a past, sordid in many respects, but also in other respects, under different climes and times, a past in which Jews had in fact flourished. The change in the status of Jews in modern times was, however, significantly different. Jews seeking their own emancipation and such support as they received from the gentile community justified it on a foundation of liberal political thought of toleration and civil and political rights. But another historic reality challenged the ascendancy of the liberal ethos. It would encounter the challenge of ethnic nationalism in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The important point is that anti-Semitism changed as conditions changed and as Jews changed their condition. It cannot be fully known except in its precise historic structures. Neither can the question of tolerance and the processes of emancipation be understood ahistorically. Both had assumed many forms before the eighteenth century, and would, in succeeding

generations, ebb and wane, take on new features, discard others, but never remain the same, as in some Platonic ideal form.

Emancipation after 1791 in France was based on the premise that the Jews would be recognized as individuals entitled to citizenship, but not as a "nation," that is, a community with legal autonomy. This brought to an end the *ancien régime*'s grant to them of *privilèges*, similar to those enjoyed by other corporate bodies. The special status of the Jews was recognized under Napoleon as strictly religious, with legislation establishing the *Grand Sanhédrine* and the *Consistoire* that regulated Jewish faith, while subordinating it to national law. But this apparently benign change concealed something sinister, as if Jews, while being extended citizenship, remained somewhat suspect. Against their "untrustworthiness," Napoleon brought before rabbinical and Jewish lay leaders proposals to limit the movement and restrict the occupations of Alsatian Jews, to have local governments report on the practice of usury, and, among other provisions, to have Jews serve compulsorily in the army (non-Jews were able to find replacements).[5] These undercurrents of mistrust were a permanent feature of French national life, but were kept at bay in the Jewish community, eager to find the best means of expanding further avenues of integration and become an unchallenged part of the nation. We may, however, see in the revolutionary changes that placed national sovereignty at the center of political and communal life, an opening for elisions in the concept of citizenship, when it might suit the state to review who did and who did not possess the qualifications for it.

Some 40 to 50 years after the Revolution, Jewish communities were able to feel a heightened sense of self-esteem, though not without internal disagreements over the future of Judaism.[6] What may be seen is an effort during this period to revitalize Judaism, to make it responsive to modernity. The February 8, 1831 law declared Jewish rabbis to be civil servants paid by the state, and it also authorized funds for Jewish schools. Even before these changes, Jewish intellectuals were concerned to improve rabbinic education and Jewish education in general and discussed the desirability of introducing reforms to Jewish rituals. Their chief objective was to reconcile tradition and revolutionary ideals, renewing the concept of regeneration that had, before and during the Revolution, been a common theme among Jews and gentiles. Now, however, the central point of controversy was whether, in the name of accommodation to the *patrie*, the final destination of regeneration might actually end in the sacrifice of Judaism to Christianity. Indeed, the traditional rituals of Jewish cultural and religious life, including circumcision and the observance of the Sabbath and its restrictions on the seventh day of the week became symbols for and against reform on either side of the debate. But the discussions around the question of the universality of Judaism bring vividly to light how French Jewish intellectuals in mid-century sought to find a path that would justify Enlightenment hopes without betraying Judaic ideals. This found its most ardent exponent in R. Salomon Ulmann who, in 1843, insisted that religious rites, especially the doing of good deeds, signified

the true meaning of universalism.[7] On the other side, exemplified in the work of Elie Halévy of Metz, was a universalism that rested on interpretation of key passages in Leviticus (19:18) and Deuteronomy (23:20) that spoke of all humans and every human being as a brother. Halévy worked with others of like mind to uncover the true "essence" of Judaism in these sacred texts and identified it with the ideals of the Enlightenment. Still others walked a narrow path, seeing in the compromises that reform entailed the eventual disappearance of Judaism. It was clear that the regeneration theme lay at the foundation of the debates, and it remained powerful enough to be seen, as Jay Berkovitz has put it, not, as formerly, "a process through which the Jews of France were to be transformed into upstanding and productive citizens," but "as a program that French Jews would actively administer themselves."[8]

These conflicts may also be seen, as Michael Graetz argues, in terms of center and periphery. At the center, an elite concentrated Jewish leadership, but at the periphery, there was room for looser forms of Jewish self-expression: "[M]embership in the community became an act of will," and "[a]s a result, a distancing from the community did not necessarily mean a total break." At the periphery, the Torah was reinterpreted to meet the criteria of the Enlightenment. Away from the center, Jewish intellectuals matched the Torah's universalism with that of the Enlightenment, and transformed a theologic message into a political and historic one. They joined the currents of modernization, but without, paradoxically, finding an anchor in traditional Jewish society, the newer forms of Judaism would not have emerged.[9] French centralism was certainly a factor in shaping the evolution of French Jewish responses to conditions in a post-emancipation world, but Jews, in societies that neither experienced the impact of the Revolution directly nor lived under a centralized and bureaucratic apparatus, also registered divisions over the key questions of reform and tradition and expressed the fear that the first meant an inevitable drift towards assimilation.

Down to the Dreyfus Affair—aspects of which will be discussed in the next Chapter—indeed, on the very eve of the political crisis that it spawned, the debate on the role of Jews in fostering modernization and secularism reveals how assimilation became a question that engaged both friends and foes of the Jews.[10] Alarmed by Edouard Drumont's vicious anti-Semitic diatribe, *La France Juive*, which appeared in 1886, Ernest Renan, for example, considered how the Jewish presence was shaping the future of France. Renan's brand of anti-Semitism was far from the pernicious fantasies of Drumont, but his politer version, based on his support for science, *laicité*, and the defense of the republic, existed alongside his opposition to Drumont. These causes were ostentatiously opposed by Drumont's followers as another instance of how Judaism was undermining the foundations of ancient France. There was, as I see it, a kind of symmetry between, on the one hand, Renan's position and that of Bernard Lazare's on the Left; and, on the other hand—on the Right—the stance taken by the editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Ferdinand Brunetière, who felt that the Jews

were not alone responsible for the decline in France's traditional values. Others, like Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, the political scientist, and Renan's disciple, James Darmesteter, joined them in debating a similarity between modernity, and, in Brunetière's epithet, "carnal" Jewish ideals which were said to be in sharp contrast to the Christian mystical ideal. Modernity in this view was the triumph of materialism. But there was no single and accepted view on the sources of modernity. Darmesteter welcomed the changes and declared that Judaism rid of cultism, while bringing to prominence its prophetic traditions, was perfectly reconcilable with the Rights of Man and Citizen, liberty and equality. He looked forward to the end of the "material" history of the Jews and the opening of a new era in human consciousness; while Leroy-Beaulieu decried the end of Judaism or "dejudaisation." Modernization had brought about the erosion of Judaism; the civilization that had emancipated them, he said, was placing them in dire danger.[11] Lazare saw lurking in this species of philo-Semitism a roundabout way of reinforcing anti-Semitism, for if, as he argued, Leroy-Beaulieu insisted on the minor importance of Jews, he was bestowing on them a certain inferiority.

We may be reminded here of one of Voltaire's chief goals—to reduce the importance of Jews in the rise of civilization in the West. As well, we might recall his failure to recognize that, by the eighteenth century, Jews had taken long strides away from the economy of usury and were becoming a vital part of international trade. Others figured in the debates, for example, Léon Bloy, whose anti-Semitism was scarcely veiled by his preference for the majority of Jews who lived in conditions of poverty, and Zadoc Kahn, the chief Rabbi of France, who took refuge in a vague ecumenism. On the eve of the Dreyfus Affair, the debate centered on the perceived threats of Jewish assimilation to France and the risks it posed to Judaism itself. Lazare, who was to play a key role in the turmoil of the Dreyfus Affair, did not, in the years leading up to it, give up his belief in the long-term assimilation of French Jews, and preferred Bloy's Catholicism to Leroy-Beaulieu's belief in Jewish inferiority. At the height of the Affair, we find in Emile Zola's 1896 *Pour les Juifs* an attack on the anti-Semites for setting the clock back. His stance is hardly unambiguous, and even less friendly; strong echoes of the views he expressed in, for example, his novel, *L'Argent*, may be seen in his conviction that assimilation would have succeeded had they kept their silence:

> If we still have Jews among us, the fault is yours. They would have disappeared, or been assimilated, if you hadn't forced them to defend themselves, to huddle together, to cultivate their racial stubbornness. And to this very day you are the source of their real strength, because by over-emphasizing its existence you reinforce it. So you finally create the danger you dread by the fact of calling attention to its existence. By dint of threatening a bogeyman you create a real live monster. So let's

> have an end with your prattle. From the moment the Jew is a mere man like us he will be our brother.[12]

After the Dreyfus Affair, assimilation was no longer seen as a realistic answer to the Jewish Question, and those who sought such an exit had greater qualms. Indeed, when Lazare scathingly turned on emancipated French Jews, accusing them of cowardice and super-jingoism, he turned radically away from his own earlier confidence and revealed the magnitude of the price Jews had to pay in their striving for acceptance:

> It is not enough for them to reject any solidarity with their foreign-born brethren; they have also to go charging them with all the evils, which their own cowardice engenders. They are not content with being more jingoist than the native Frenchmen; like all emancipated Jews everywhere, they have also of their own volition broken all ties of solidarity. Indeed, they go so far that for the three dozen or so men in France who are ready to defend one of their martyred brethren you can find some thousands ready to stand guard over Devil's Island, alongside the most rabid patriots of the country.[13]

## On either side of the divide: enlighteners and anti-enlighteners

Not immediately apparent at the time was the contradiction, later to become a matter of intense conflict, between newly found Jewish self-confidence and the weight of French nationalism as it questioned origins and birthrights. The questioning, never far from the surface of politics, broke through it at crucial times of the nineteenth century, most dramatically and pivotally at the time of the Dreyfus Affair, and later more lethally under Vichy when Jews were divided into two groups, those born in France and those who had migrated there, especially after 1918. These developments proved a rough and dangerous testing time for Jews, won over to the achievements of the Revolution, but especially to the ideals of the Enlightenment and to those who opposed them, to which I will now turn, leaving the trauma inflicted on Jewish consciousness in France by the Dreyfus Affair for discussion, as I promised, in the next Chapter.

Since the Revolution, the Enlightenment has had a mixed reception in France. In older histories of France, the battle between the principles and slogans of the Revolution and their counter-revolutionary counterparts symbolized the historic dualities of a divided country and served as a fairly reliable guide to the political disputes of Left and Right. Almost from the period of the high water mark of the Enlightenment, which was seen by its detractors as the prologue to the Revolution, in its early moderate and later more radical phases, the *philosophes* were condemned by a host of intellectuals on the Right whose animus was religiously inspired. From this group must be

excluded Alexis de Tocqueville whose major criticism of the *philosophes* was their uncritical adulation of individual reason, not their anti-clericalism—although on this question he underestimated the severity of the Revolution's attacks on religion. He spoke of Voltaire, not as an unsparing critic of Christianity, but as a herald of reason—the only counterweight to untested beliefs and laws.[14] At the same time, he acknowledged the failures of theology. Reason is, he wrote, a necessary feature of social development; freedom to think has existed ever since there were men with the authority to pronounce on questions of belief. By the eighteenth century, religious authority had, however, become dogma; and against it reason was posed as an abstract principle, when it was proclaimed "as an axiom of absolute and general truth." It displaced older social mores that, starting from the principle of individual conscience, considered belief a matter for individual contemplation: the experience of religious terror in a lonely cosmos had become a private matter (as he was to say again, telling his friend Madame Swetchine, that "life [is] inexplicable [in this world] and in the next [it is] frightening," while urging the need for human interaction in private and public life.)[15] In fact, he theorized that a double displacement was at work. Now, reason was on public display and transformed into a kind of universal religion. The new dogma was as much to be deplored as the previous one. In short, no principle, religious or non-religious, erected as dogma, was acceptable, for belief was a question of individual choice.[16] Such was the inevitable price of modernity, marking what Max Weber would in the twentieth century famously call the "disenchantment of the world." Tocqueville was no doctrinaire opponent of the Enlightenment. Not long before his death he asserted his approval of "the ideas of the eighteenth century, . . . or, at least the just, reasonable, applicable portion of those ideas, which are, after all, my own."[17] We must note, however, that in stressing reason he coupled it with what he considered to be its just and practicable application. Thus, he regretted that part of the Enlightenment which ignored the human propensity to find consolation in what was closest and traditionally to hand, namely, what its detractors would condemn as irrational belief. Much earlier, at the time of the publication of *Democracy in America*, he urged moralists and philosophers to guard democratic society against the perils of materialism and skepticism, not by reviving a single authoritative voice, but by asking governments to behave as if they believed in the immortality of the soul; and there can be no doubt that he believed that religious sensibility was an irreducible human need.[18]

It was otherwise with thinkers like Bonald, Maistre, and the abbé Barruel during the Revolution, who raged against the *lumiéres* for their impiety, their rejection of traditional values and religious beliefs and rituals, their confidence in science, their secularism and universalism, and, not least, their insistence on liberal constitutionalism and democratic forms. They represented the rejection of the past as a blow to, and proof of the decline of, French classical greatness and prestige. The waning of French power was,

thus, due almost wholly to the pernicious ideas of the eighteenth century. Their opposition to the Enlightenment was, however, not cut from the same cloth. Voltaire and Roussau, for example, were treated differently. Voltaire for Bonald was responsible for all of France's misfortunes—the France that had fallen from its European summit. Voltaire's jibes against, his frivolous disregard for, and his hatred of, all that was serious in life was destined to cause harm for generations to come.[19] But, perhaps not surprisingly, he excepted Voltaire from the "philosophical school" when it came to Voltaire's denunciation of the Jews. But he could not bestow unqualified praise upon Voltaire: Voltaire, he alleged, had allowed himself to be "Judaised" for not seeing that legitimizing the Mosaic faith was incompatible with Christianity—an invention of Bonald's imagination. As we saw, Voltaire urged rather the imposition of severe limits on both. Bonald's remarks on the Jews are remarkable for their deep hatred, unrelieved by irony, and, not unsurprisingly, by wit. His belief and warnings that Jews were increasing in large numbers and threatened the French native population; that they were in league with foreign Jews to increase their wealth by employing prodigious amounts of capital to achieve economic power, presumably in an uneven competition with Gentile sources; that they used it to bribe public officials; and that they reduced their debtors to a state of feudal servitude, are a catalogue of charges that betray a paranoid mind, summed up by his doom laden curse: "This is what philosophy has done in France to favor the Jews." Surprisingly, Adam Smith was also implicated. His *Wealth of Nations* was a mediocre work that instructed the world on how to enrich itself instead of searching for the means to expand and support virtue. The Jews should have been purged of their immorality before they were given political rights. They could never be citizens under Christianity without becoming Christian first. Even that was not enough for Bonald. It is impossible to ensure, he went on, the reformation of Jews by shows of benevolence. Once the Jews were shown any liberality, there would be no way back if they exploited it for their own benefit. "[I]t is impossible, without creating a frightful upheaval, and perhaps without a total *extermination*, (italics mine) to return a people to a state of subjection … from which place they have been rescued." As if to clinch his case against them, he called on Herder who, in his *Adrastea*, presumably predicted that Jews who formed a state within a state wherever they lived would bring all Christians to a state of slavery.[20]

Herder's complaints against the ancient Jews were, in fact, not unlike Voltaire's. Like him, he held their religion in contempt and its influence on Christianity an anachronistic burden irrelevant in the modern world. Their learning was a testament to pedantry and their cosmogony was impervious to genuine inquiry into the nature of time and history. Yet unlike Voltaire, he praised the Scriptures and placed them above the sacred writings of the Chinese, Persians, and Muslims. Jewish identification with usury was, in Herder's eyes, the most damaging accusation that could be made against them. He showed, to a greater degree than Voltaire, a sense of anxiety and confusion, as when he said almost

in the same breath that, if a history of the Jews through their years of dispersal were written, a general picture of mankind would emerge, but this would not, he added, remove the larger stain of Jewish parasitism, "a race of cunning brokers, who . . . have never been inspired with an ardent passion for their own honor, for a habitation, for a country of their own."[21] We shall look at Herder in another context later.

Bonald's constant accusation of sophistry as an epithet to attack Rousseau and Montesquieu was meant to brand them, along with Voltaire, as shallow thinkers shockingly innocent of the true roots of social and political association. They elevated a creed of individualism as a principle of organized life and were responsible for bringing the corporate life of the *ancien régime* to its knees; and he named Bossuet as its supreme apologist and staunchest defender.[22] He also paid homage to Maistre, who, in assessing the nature of the French Revolution, wrote about it as a singular phenomenon particular to France. Nowhere else, not even in England with its history of violence, had such a negative destruction of order ever taken place.[23] Maistre's view of history included, but did not stop at an assessment of, a few individual figures of the Enlightenment. He dismissed Voltaire as a dishonest thinker, showed less contempt for Rousseau, but labeled him dangerous, and, while mentioning Bayle as the father of modern disbelief, exonerated him slightly from his spirit of total condemnation by saying that he did not deny belief as much as he doubted and gave almost equal time to both sides of the dispute between belief and non-belief.[24] As a whole, the Enlightenment was a period of "criminal frivolousness," a phenomenon of unprecedented human arrogance and the source of modern political evil. It inspired, and was the gateway to, the Revolution, a phenomenon of unparalleled barbarism that was due to wreak unimagined human destruction. The Enlightenment had encouraged the false belief of entrusting the future of humankind to a doctrine of written law. "All written law is nothing but a necessary evil, produced by weakness or by human malice. It amounts to nothing if it has not received sanction from an *a priori* source rather than a written one [[T]oute loi écrite n'est qu'un mal nécessaire, produit par l'infirmité ou par la malice humaine; et . . . elle n'est rien du tout, si elle n'a reçu une sanction antérieure et non écrite]."[25] What human beings must remind themselves is that if the "eternally living *word* does not give life to what is written, it will never become *word*, that is to say, *life*. [Si la *parole* éternellement vivante ne vivifie l'écriture, jamais celle-ci ne deviendra *parole*, c'est-à-dire *vie*]."[26] Providence had chosen France as a place to test the modern heresies of the Enlightenment as just punishment for an erring nation forgetful of its religious origins and monarchic loyalties.[27]

The consequences of the disaster that only Providence would in the course of time reveal, is an echo of Bossuet's idea that universal history was in the hands of God. The origin of the decline was the Reformation, when the revolt of individual reason against "general reason" brought about all that was evil. Still, the seventeenth century had not entered the fullest

period of destructiveness that was yet to come. Even Bayle, the father of modern incredulity, was no match for his successors.[28] Not only a religious heresy, but also a civil one, was let loose. Books bearing titles such as political and philosophic history were neither philosophic nor political, and glaringly reveal the work of frenzied minds.[29] Human beings lack the power to create, only God has such power. To support this principle, Maistre sets up a footnote, presumably citing David Hume: "The principle that all legitimate power comes from the people is noble and is itself specious. However, it is contradicted by the heavy weight of history and experience."[30] Hume was, indeed, appalled at the degree to which the English Civil War became a testament to the folly of establishing an "imaginary liberty." He condemned as well the supreme arrogance of the revolutionaries, and warned against the fate awaiting a society that flouts the rules of authority and obedience under the guise of religious precepts.[31]

The abbé Barruel's conspiracy theory of the Revolution did, on the other hand, shift the stress almost entirely to individuals who manipulated underlying discontent by generating a permanent state of social conflict.[32] Cochin, known for his thesis that a common outlook, both as process and outcome, inspired what turned out to be the destructive force of the *sociétés de pensée* and Masonic lodges, seems to have brought Barruel up to date, but at the same time François Furet is not far wrong in reversing Cochin's way of assigning cause and effect by pointing out that he never forgave Rousseau for Robespierre, when he should instead have cleaved Robespierre closer to the inherent dynamic of Jacobinism. Furet conceded, if only for a moment, that Robespierre had to deal with "the constraints of public safety," thereby, it would seem, recognizing that contingency was not an unimportant factor in explaining the ferocity of the Terror.[33] At the same time, for Furet, it was more important to insist on the idea that the Jacobin Terror was built into the very structure of the Revolution itself, indeed, that it was the key to it, and furthermore, that, as an ideology of pure democracy, it endured as a seismic force in the politics of France long afterwards. What impelled it between 1789 and 1794 was a Manichean view of historic forces that was, in the Jacobin imaginary world, only grasped by ascribing evil intent to the Revolution's opponents.[34] The Jacobin world of good pitted, I suggest, against evil, matched Maistre's world of Jacobin evil, wreaking havoc among religious populations, each of which was driven by beliefs in conspiracy and plots. The mass killings during the Terror were inexcusable, but the various revolutionary factions that also escalated charges of plots against one another, we should remember, did have to fight against their external and internal enemies, both of which despised the Revolution, root and branch, and rose in arms against it. Thus, the ideology of pure democracy cannot be considered uniquely responsible for the Terror. Gaxotte, who took his cue from Maistre, found little fault with the *ancien régime*, laying most of the blame for its failure on the rise of individualism that had begun to infect Europe as early as the Protestant

Reformation, and wormed its way into the very precincts of the royal administration.

Whether one agreed with or took exception to the *philosophes*, both sides of the quarrel drew a direct line from the Enlightenment to the Revolution and its aftermath. Though the Left took account of factors other than ideas, it could not easily repudiate its own ideologic genesis that registered the beginning of a social and political movement; nor could the Right separate itself from its religious roots. But if the delineation of differences between Left and Right, between the Enlightenment and the counter-Enlightenment, is to be taken in a more serious direction, their resemblances as well as their differences must be looked at with a sharper eye. Both had as a common thread a mixture of untested ideas, prejudices, and a fair amount of hubris. On the Left, Enlightenment themes of regeneration were given primary attention, which in turn were folded into the revolutionary rhetoric of rebirth. Regeneration also became a theme, as we saw, that Jews—much more uneasily—took up in their efforts to find a place for themselves in post-Revolutionary France. Emancipation was written into the legal codes, but not without difficulty, because of the not-so-easily eradicable misgivings that Jews were for the most part irremediably stuck in a permanent mold, and had to be persuaded to enter, or, if need be, to be thrust, into the modern world. How Left and Right divided on this question cannot be explained, as Ronald Schechter says, along a political spectrum.[35] Democrats and anti-Democrats revealed similar inhibitions and reservations. At the time, resemblances between them were greater. Necessary safeguards were placed as a reasonable strategy in the foreground of the discussions. The values of tolerance and citizenship were brought forward as legitimate concerns in debates that espoused universalism and inclusiveness, but were repositioned and degraded by political expediency. It was within these indeterminate boundaries that the debates were conducted, but they underlined the question's intractability. In this unknown terrain, the idea of full tolerance and full membership in the French *pays* was regarded as an offense by the Right, but the Left, for example, as early as in the decade of the Revolution, most egregiously in the case of Jean-François Reubell and those who sided with him, was not immune from such sentiments and arguments.

Thus, for some time, the welcome that was put out to Jews was very far from full-hearted. Lacking the numbers, wealth, and political experience, Jews were unable to initiate effective efforts to end their *ancien régime* corporate status. After the first steps were taken by non-Jews, Jews began to show signs that they understood the benefits of the civil society opened up by the Revolution and were prepared to, and indeed could, meet all the requirements of citizenship, but more impressively they eagerly took part in modernization, ranging themselves on the side preferably of mobile rather than landed wealth, exhibiting their skills in modern finance, as well as seeking careers in science, technology, medicine, and the law. On the Left, socialists, such as Charles Fourier—but not Saint-Simon—who took some

of their cues from the *philosophes*, decried the trend and did not hesitate to exhume anti-Jewish prejudices. In Fourier's case, Jews were branded as the very epitome of all that was modern and thereby reprehensible. Large economic and social organization displacing the lives of small communities was not an advance in the effort to create social bonds. Fourier pictured Iscariote, a German Jew who comes to France and amasses money by driving out his competitors.[36] His disciple, Alphonse Toussenel, railed against "financial feudalism," identifying it with Jewish financiers.[37] Jews, seeking as quick and painless as possible exit from the Ghetto, eagerly embraced modernity, and saw the accumulation of wealth as the means to achieve it. The Saint-Simonian program of industrial organization, which envisioned a revamped banking system as the key to economic modernization, attracted a number of important Jews who saw themselves as productive industrial bankers ready to supplant old-style discount bankers, who dealt in short-term interest commercial loans and served only to strengthen the circle of industrial stagnation. The Left put its trust in a benign universalism, and expected Jews to melt into a harmonious whole, while the Right wanted them out of sight. Many Jews, especially on the Left, would come in the nineteenth century to regard the abbé Grégoire as a hero and commemorated his efforts to end their isolation and the social stigma that had kept them there, while overlooking his project to transform them into good peasants. Sixty years on, the Fourierist, Alexandre Weill, echoed the sentiments of fellow Jews on the Left who took their stand with utopian socialists in their proclamations of a future untarnished by division of any kind:

> Why speak to us of Jews? Henceforth there will be no Jews, no Catholics, no Protestants, only brothers and disciples of Jesus. From now on, as Isaiah said, there will be only one God and one people. To claim that there will still be Jews and Judaism is not only pride but ignorance. Jews are men only because they have emerged from Judaism. … Spinoza was no more Jewish than I, who was born into that religion.[38]

A not dissimilar credo animated the ranks of the Jewish Saint-Simonians, though among them there were divisions on the exact nature of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, turning some away from an outright repudiation of the former, but sending others less ambiguously in the direction of Saint-Simon's new Christianity (*Le nouveau christianisme*). Driving all the Saint-Simonians, as the Jewish Fourierists were also driven, was the dream of a vanguard of Jews and Christians looking for redemption that would end eons of mutual hostility, ushering in a new epoch of universal brotherhood.

We may see in this brief extract from Weill's appeal and in Saint-Simonian messianism an encapsulation of Voltaire's fantasy, minus its anti-clericalism, a fusion of primitive Christianity focused on Jesus, more human than divine, and socialist ideals, based on fraternal principles. We may also see

how far the dream of assimilation took Jews who stood outside both the institutional and religious foundations of Jewish life, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, their fuller but still distant acceptance into the mainstream. This suggests that insufficient regard has been given to the changes that were being wrought on the body of Enlightenment thought in the nineteenth century. Voltaire would have regarded, as a new form of blasphemy, the very thought of a rekindled Christianity as an instrument of emancipation. It was as if religion wearing new clothes still wore the old ones under them, and in its newest masquerade falsely acted as the torchbearer of the Enlightenment. When Grégoire was the first priest to be pantheonized on the occasion of the bicentenary of the French Revolution, leaders of the Church refused to attend the ceremony. Grégoire and Voltaire now share the same resting place.

Voltaire would not have missed the double irony—the enlightened priest memorialized by a secular state and a Church holding on tight to its anti-ecumenism. Most of all he would surely have gasped at the continuing power of religion. The Revolution itself changed the direction of the Enlightenment. Indeed, it breached the Enlightenment. It gave new life to religion by ending its economic and political power, as Tocqueville saw with characteristic insight.[39] Voltaire would have welcomed the diminution, but he would not have been prepared for the revitalization of the kind of fanatical belief that Tocqueville also decried, but from a different starting point. The Revolution, he added significantly, by taking up new or older ideas on human nature—the stress that was placed on the abstract universal "man-in-himself," rather than any "particular" values tying, as Burke, as we shall see, would also have it, men to their particular social order or nation—instead of reducing the power of religion, gave it new life. "It created an atmosphere of missionary fervor and indeed, assumed all the aspects of a religious revival … it developed into a species of religion, if a singularly imperfect one, since it was without a God, without a ritual or promise of a future life." The revolutionary catechism posited innate virtue in man and his perfectibility, the foundations for the "regenera[tion] of the whole human race. Of this passionate idealism was born what was in fact a new religion, [which] weaned [men] away from self-regarding emotions."[40] It was this unchecked fervor that took on irrepressible force that led to insanity and disaster. In his own day, Tocqueville, however, overlooked another religious transformation, albeit on a much smaller scale. Perhaps because he disdained the evangelical side of Christianity and its newish cults, he chose to ignore the evidence all around him of a revived form of Christianity. Precisely because of its appeal to a creator and its system of rituals and promise of immortality in its new manifestations, it appealed to exactly those needs of human nature that he recognized as universal.

Clerical power continued to have a long life in France. Its rejection of the Enlightenment was not only visceral; intellectuals in the Church and their

apologists outside it kept the circle of anti-Enlighteners intact. Their voices were not unimportant, but because the battle lines between the different political factions and parties were established around the question of what constitutional regime would best serve France—a republic or a monarchy—the Enlighteners often found that their liberal principles were exploited by the Church and its lay supporters to espouse, for example, freedom of education, as when the Falloux law was adopted in 1850. Attempts by Jules Ferry in the earliest phases of the Third Republic to introduce a lay universal primary system of education were of limited success, as religious schools continued as a significant segment of the French system.

## Enlighteners and anti-enlighteners outside France

It is necessary to step back at this point to hear from some voices outside France. Their responses to the Enlightenment and the contested place of Judaism's moral and political claims demonstrate their uneasiness and lack of clarity over the question of how the second, and under what conditions, might be reconciled with the first, and why the issues that had become part of this eighteenth century discourse, assumed greater importance during the course of the Revolution. I shall choose five thinkers to argue that the divide between the Enlightenment's critics and its supporters, at least in these cardinal instances, was not as sharp as it appears, and that the reception given to Judaism, which was generally perceived as retrograde and unworthy, could not rid itself of prejudice and hostility. The first is Edmund Burke who took up the defense of tradition and faith, the old against the new. Kant is the second; Herder, the third; Hegel, the fourth; and lastly Nietzsche. Kant, of course, is the undisputed champion of Enlightenment values. Herder owes much to Burke, but does not stay with him in every one of his counter-Enlightenment's postures, and, indeed, he proves to be receptive to some of the principles of the Enlightenment. Hegel's disillusionment with the principles of the Enlightenment, principally the way in which he sought to give it a new philosophical meaning, places him among its critics, but not its opponents. Nietzsche is the troubled but the most original of Enlightenment's heirs. All five shared, nonetheless, an aversion for Judaism as a religion, its traditional inwardness, and its apparent resistance to change.

Burke is important not only for his challenge to the *philosophes*' abstract social and political speculations, which he said had been mistakenly modeled on the premises underlying chemical experimentation—a sphere very different in its nature and objectives from the study and practice of politics. A fitter template, he asserted, was the human body. An organic conception of society brought the human mind closer to the realities and verities of social and political organization. The social order was fatally misunderstood by the *philosophes*, who, evoking reason as their guide, were in fact playing to their own vanity and indulging in sophistry of the most egregious

kind to undermine authority, and worse, undoing a necessary stoicism that often suffers what is wrong to ensure the preservation of what is right. Their contempt for the past and their misunderstanding of the nature of authority and of the concrete realities of politics were quickly absorbed and disseminated, and, as it were, thrown forward to the National Assembly by the "polluted nonsense of their most licentious and giddy coffee-houses."[41] With great panache, Burke assembled the coffee-houses, the clubs, the academies and forged them together as a single conduit circling and shaping the new politics of the Revolution. He intuited and observed a freely circulating public opinion whose power knew none of the limits that had previously kept it under control. Indeed, it was a startlingly novel phenomenon.

In one direction, his organicism envisaged the state as the supreme social and political organ. He embedded the social contract in which each gives up the right to self-government and self-defense—the first law of nature—in a semi-mystical doctrine of the state that was meant to deny the individualist premises of modern natural law.[42] In the other direction, he rejected totally the abstract notion, not of civil and social, but of political rights, which he, anti-democratic to the bone, reserved for some, but not for all, in civil society. Such rights were less important than recognizing the primacy of history that gave meaning to a people's aspirations, and which are kept alive by linking them in an endless chain of memory and kinship. A society's particularity is its only way of being itself, and more authentically than loyalty to an unknown species called humanity. "There is perhaps nothing surprising," Hannah Arendt declares, having already been won over to Burke's elevation of the rights of Englishmen against an untenable notion of humanity, "that the Age of Enlightenment should have become aware of the compelling nature of axiomatic or self-evident truth," truths that are "pre-rational," [because] they inform reason but are not their product—"and since their self-evidence puts them beyond discourse and argument, they are in a sense … no less absolute than the revealed truths of religion or the automatic verities of mathematics."[43]

If there was any Enlightenment figure Burke admired it was Montesquieu, who praised the ancient legislators for avoiding the danger of treating all men alike, and who looked to the landed aristocracy to stand between "the despotism of the monarch and the despotism of the multitude."[44] Their political ascendancy had to be maintained against the mercantile, moneyed, and manufacturing interests. But, like Montesquieu, he was not opposed to the newer sources of wealth, only the stock jobbery in which Jews, he declared, had a prominent role.[45] Still, he favored full civil protection for Jews as he did for "Mahometans and even Pagans; especially if they are already possessed of any of those advantages by long and prescriptive usage; which is as sacred in this exercise of Rights, as in any other."[46] He divided Jews into two categories; he did not individualize them

in either. They were identified as belonging to a nation, and it was their tribal loyalties that gave them their identity. They could have no other:

> We have in London very respectable persons of the Jewish nation, whom we will keep, but we have of the same tribe others of a very different description—housebreakers and receivers of stolen goods, and forgers of paper currency, more than we can conveniently hang.[47]

Crucial to virtue was not naked reason. It was by any account a weak crutch:

> We are not the disciples of Voltaire. . . . We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason; because we suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations, and of ages.[48]

The putative rights proclaimed by theorists:

> are all extremes; and in proportion as they are metaphysically true, they are morally and politically false. . . . Political reason is a computing principle; adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing, morally and not metaphysically or mathematically, true moral denominations.[49]

His critique was taken up and extended by German philosophers, who had, Rehberg being the most influential, already taken steps to develop a set of philosophic assumptions and a political program that raised serious reservations about the Enlightenment.

Burke had no patience with the belief that reason was available to all equally and that its secrets would yield to the triumph of mathematic calculation in a universal human nature. In justice to Voltaire, not only does Burke indulge in hyperbole, but Isaiah Berlin is also slightly off course when he endorses Burke's condemnation of the Enlightenment as a single-minded belief in a universal human nature, and that reason will make that increasingly evident.[50] Voltaire's study of diverse human societies, as we saw, posited a weak theory of a uniform human nature. He recognized the stubborn facts of cultural differences and peculiarities, and he was less certain than is generally believed that they could be overcome or transcended so easily. And, as he shows mercilessly in *Candide*, he gives as much if not more play to the evil than to the benevolent side of human nature. Human crime and tragedy stare out at us and make us take notice; good works and virtue do not have the same purchase in our daily lives. In *The Lisbon Earthquake. An Inquiry into the Maxim*, *Whatever Is*, *Is Right*, Voltaire called Bayle "the greatest master of the art of reasoning that ever wrote, [but that he] has only taught us to doubt, and that he combats himself; he owns that man's

understanding is as weak as his life is miserable" (*OCM*, 9, 476). His rejection of a simple view of human nature and the human condition is not only to be found in his support of Bayle, in this instance, though not in others as we have noted several times. In his regard for and differences with Alexander Pope and Leibnitz, we find Voltaire, haunted by unsolvable riddles and mysteries, keenly sensitive to the play of chance and Providence, but still, in spite of the torment, he believed humanity must endure, ready to struggle against all the odds.[51]

Kant is the paradigmatic Enlightenment figure. He did not mince words in his commitment to reason:

> Our age is, in every sense of the word, the age of criticism, and everything must submit to it. Religion, on the strength of its sanctity, and law, on the strength of its majesty, try to withdraw themselves from it; but by so doing they arouse just suspicions, and cannot claim that sincere respect which reason pays to those only who have been able to stand its free and open examination.[52]

But Kant significantly linked the appeal to reason with the duty to self-knowledge and the obligation to "protect the just rights of reason, but [to] dismiss all [of its] groundless claims … according to the eternal and unalterable laws of reason."[53] His Organum of pure reason, as he called it in the Second Edition of the *Critique* would, he warned, be difficult, if ever possible to achieve, and we should "as a kind of preparation for a complete system of pure reason," concentrate on its "sources and limits" and should be called a "critique, not a doctrine, of pure reason," to guard it against errors.[54]

It remains curious that his appeal to reason as the way in which to orient thinking did not serve him better in his perception of Judaism. Ironically, his view rested in part on Mendelssohn's understanding of it as law-centered. But Mendelssohn saw it as embodying divine legislation, while Kant looked at it as "not a religion at all but simply the union of a number of individuals who, since they belonged to a particular stock, established themselves into a community under purely political laws, hence not into a church." Thus, it was neither divine nor universal. Its laws supported a theocracy and were bound up with and inseparable from a particular people. It was not religious because it denied an afterlife, one of the key features of religious faith, a feature that Voltaire also felt deprived it of religious essence. Like Voltaire, Kant also turned against Judaism because "it excluded the whole human race from its communion, a people especially chosen by Jehovah for himself, hostile to all other people and hence treated with hostility by all of them."[55] Above all, there was a fatal flaw in Judaism, from which the Jewish prophets could not rescue it: they had themselves failed to create a state free from ecclesiastical and civil burdens that would have enabled it to deal with neighboring states.[56]

Herder's outlook on Judaism and the Enlightenment embedded both in a broader cultural context. He has traditionally been represented as standing in sharp opposition to the Enlightenment. A good first clue to the nature of Herder's alienation from conventional enlightened thought is to be found in Ernst Cassirer's judgment. He can be depended on for a sensitive appreciation that takes in some of, but not the entire, truth about his antagonism. Cassirer threw bouquets in Herder's direction for being able to develop a philosophy of history in the strict sense,[57] unlike Voltaire who was oblivious to the "'all-too-human,' the accidental, and merely personal,"[58] regarding them as illusory.[59] In short, the contingent, for Voltaire, is ephemeral; the hidden structures of civilization are permanent. Second, the search for, and the fixation on, the universal that permeated much of Enlightenment thought places Herder within it, especially if we do not make the error of losing sight of his particular understanding of humanity. For Cassirer, Herder:

> does not represent a break with the thought of the Enlightenment but evolves slowly and steadily from this thought and matures on its soil. . . . Enlightenment thought could not, however, stop with this beginning; it was forced to draw new conclusions and to make new demands, which in turn opened up the whole horizon of the historical world.[60]

As a general statement, it is hard to argue with Cassirer's qualification, especially as it looks forward to those who argue that the Enlightenment, if it is to live, must turn a spotlight on itself, as Nietzsche, whom I shall presently turn to, urged upon its friends. Cassirer's emendation also has hidden in itself a less obvious substrate that plays as a keynote to the present study, namely, the battle around the concepts of the particular and the universal, not omitting the vague concept of human essence, which Voltaire used so unreflectively and with such poor judgment in his unhistoric dismissal of the Jews.

A good place to start from is Herder's rejection of, and his repulsion for, what he considered the glibness and false self-confidence of the *philosophes*, their faith in linear progress, and their hypothesis of ideal human beings living in an ideal society.[61] For Herder, humanity was not headed in such a direction, certainly not in any empirically determined way. It is made up instead of particular cultures, each with its particular ties of kinship and social solidarity, sedulously cultivated—as the soil is cultivated—over millennia in different climes and times. If we are to understand human societies what must be looked for is the proper division between *Kultur* and *Aufklärung*, as what is cultivated on an individual and social level is passed on from generation to generation. *Aufklärung* is registered with each advance in human understanding, but the values of cultures are not commensurable. The expectation that humanity over time will move from cultural diversity

to cultural uniformity, Herder believed, was not only unrealistic. If the notion of incommensurability were to be ignored, it would mark the triumph, not of humanity, but of oppression and colonialism. It also would constitute a gross example of philosophy run riot, as it paid no heed to the anthropologic evidence. He was plainly critical of the Eurocentric arrogance displayed towards primitive peoples, just as he was impatient with European failure to understand earlier European cultures with different value systems. According to this *Weltanschauung*, Europeans had rightly and reasonably abandoned relics of an earlier benighted age. The culture of the Middle Ages, for example, was tossed aside by this explanatory system as so much unwanted baggage. Though Voltaire saw the Middle Ages as a period of religious hegemony, his treatment of non-European cultures is, as we saw, also relatively enlightened and open.

One of the difficulties in coming to terms with Herder, who was not always "consistent nor clear, neither always precise nor specific,"[62] may be isolated by examining his notion of human nature—a problem that does not distinguish him from Voltaire and other *philosophes*. Just as Voltaire's ideas on human nature tended to sink into incoherence, so, it seems, did Herder's. Voltaire never presented a clear picture of how his belief in the ascent of human reason could be reconciled with his other, just as firmly held belief, that certain cultures were destined to remain where they were and ultimately fated to vanish from the face of the earth. He was also of two minds about human essence, ridiculing it, on the one hand, as folly, as we saw in his critique of Pascal who declared that the human mind constituted human essence; while declaring, on the other hand, at least in the case of the Jews, that they possessed an unchanging human essence, which he never defined except offhandedly as the cultural offspring of a mendacious psychology. In this reading, psychology appears to be the antechamber to culture. Herder's concept is a little more complex, even if not totally satisfactory, but in its stress on the proclivity of human beings to come together to ensure their security and, on that basis, develop the means to live together and be creative, human essence might best be understood, not as the fulfillment of a Hobbesian or a Mandevillean script. The difference is not so much that Herder and Voltaire take opposite positions on the importance of culture as the product of specific historic and geographic situations and that these determining factors are the training grounds for humans, it lies rather in the selective ways in which Voltaire speaks, singling out the Jews for special treatment and saying, more, not less, that they are exceptions. For Herder, it is through cultural determinants that human beings transform their lives.

Where Herder comes close to Voltaire is in his lapse into thinking that "natives," such as Mungals, may be destined to lead static lives. If taken out of their environments, he says, they suffer either degeneration or will be improved; but if they remain where they have always been they will be the same as they were millennia ago, and will remain so "as long as it [their country] remains unaltered by nature or by art."[63] There is, thus, an element, not entirely tentative, in Herder

that allows for an external transformation of a distinct culture. Transformation is the key, and Herder seems to be open to the idea that it might be initiated more from outside a culture than from its internal operations. The end of local culture might, thus, occur when history, represented by a conquering culture, is "brought" to the anthropologic, and when it does so marks its end. Voltaire, we saw, was convinced that not all societies would survive such a contact when it took place, and there was little doubt in his mind that, as different parts of the globe came closer together, the power to resist the contacts would count for little and that they would soon learn the benefits of civilization. Superior to "natural" existence, it wakened human beings to their mutual obligations and to their natural benevolence, which, in turn, rested on a law-ordered society, but which, again in turn, depended on its elites to demonstrate to the lower classes (and primitive peoples) its advantages, while underscoring the puerility of immediate self-gratification. He writes in the *Treatise on Tolerance*:

> Nature tells us all . . . you must look after one another, and since you are ignorant you must educate each other. . . . I have given you strength with which to cultivate the ground and a flicker of intelligence to guide you. I have placed in each of your hearts a seed of compassion with which to help one another through life (*TT*, p. 100).

Herder proves not to have removed himself so totally from the mainstream of the Enlightenment. If he does not deny intelligence to "natives" and to their capacity to act on ideas, he does not stray far from Voltaire who does not deny them the faculty of reason, and like Voltaire, who differentiates between primitive and civilized peoples, Herder appears to demonstrate his preference for the spread of reason, as it moves human beings to trade rather than to conquer. Thus, does art embellish civilized living and further encourage human solidarity? Indeed, it resembles the progress towards sociability Voltaire talks about, but it has more of the ring of fraternity. The crucial difference between Herder and Voltaire hinges strongly on the power they attribute to the value, integrity, and desirability of understanding, and perhaps even preserving particular cultures. Rousseau, we saw at the conclusion of the previous Chapter, suspected the kind of universalism that would overlook the particular and, therefore, fail to build an authentic universalism. Yet he thought such a universalism was beyond human reach. Herder was not as pessimistic; he introduced the notion of "*sich einfühlen*," the capacity to feel into the time, place, and history of a people. In his more imaginative insight into Jewish culture, he left Voltaire far behind: "Moses," Herder writes, "bound the heart of his people to their native soil." Isaiah Berlin comments:

> Land, common language, tradition, sense of kinship, common tradition, common law as a freely accepted 'covenant'—all these

> interwoven factors, together with the bond created by their sacred literature, enabled the Jews to retain their identity in dispersion—but especially the fact that their eyes remained focused upon their original geographical home … historical continuity, not race, is what counts.[64]

We must remember that Voltaire was inclined to treat biblical Jews as a local, self-isolating culture without a proper history, and contemporary European Jews as carriers into the modern world of a bygone era, who might arguably qualify for a history when they gave up their differences. Berlin thus works hard to make Herder a friend of the Jews, as does Hannah Arendt, who, however, has the better argument. In the name of "the basic unity of humanity," she said, echoing her argument of some 20 years earlier, Herder sought to make room for them," she claims, "as more alien and thus the more exotic, than they actually were, so that the demonstration of humanity as a universal principle might be more effective."[65] Voltaire was almost utterly alienated from Judaism for displaying such generosity. His prestige reinforced an already negative picture. Herder, together with others among his contemporaries, offered a more subtle, but not unambiguous picture. Both exalted humanity. The former found it hard to see Jews, as they then lived, as part of it. Herder did not see such difficulties, seeing in their difference a perfect example of how humanity writ large need not blink its eyes at the variousness of humankind.

For Hegel, philosophy was the necessary initial point for the realization of political and individual freedom, but neither could be advanced and the course of history fulfilled unless it regained its proper function as a guide, not only to rescue it from the Revolution's descent into Terror, but also as the only way to rework the concept of reason. The necessity of error is built into his dialectic of history. We cannot know it until we have lived through it. "It has been said," he wrote late in life, "that the French Revolution arose out of philosophy. … But this philosophy is at first only abstract thought, not concrete comprehension of absolute truth, which is immeasurably different."[66] The French Revolution came about primarily because of the *ancien régime*'s failure to initiate the changes needed to end the injustice of the political system. Good government rests on what he called *[Moment]*, the *disposition* to think of "the laws and constitution as firmly fixed, and to see it as the highest duty of individuals to subject their particular wills to them." This did not happen during the Revolution. Indeed, only abstract philosophic principles prevailed, and power was lodged in the Legislature, which failed to govern. Power then shifted nominally to the people, but actually to the Convention where abstract principles of freedom and virtue were pitted against the many. But the people were themselves mired in corruption, not apprehending any needs outside their own immediate interests. Thus, the French Revolution did not bring about authentic freedom. The liberalism of the Restoration, a regime enshrining the "atomistic principle

of individual wills," similarly repeated "the formalistic view of freedom." And "with this abstraction," the liberals again held government at ransom, ensuring an endless cycle of events that would end when rational men understood, as a philosophic question true to its name, that *sittlichkeit*, the ethical life of the state, must form the basis of true citizenship and authority.[67] But he warned that the various stages by which reason will unfold itself cannot be known until human beings are living in them, at which time they will understand it. As Hegel was to say in the preface to the *Philosophy of Right*:

> To comprehend what is, this is the task of philosophy, because what is, is reason. Whatever happens, every individual is a child of his time; so philosophy too is it own time, apprehended in thoughts. It is just as absurd to fancy that a philosophy can transcend its contemporary world as it is to fancy that an individual can overleap his own age, jump over Rhodes. If his theory really goes beyond the world as it is and builds an ideal one as it ought to be, that world exists indeed, but only in his opinions, an unsubstantial element where anything you please may, in fancy, be built.[68]

In his earlier years, Hegel did not doubt the superiority of reason as the faculty that would vanquish the foundations of religious cults and rituals. But, at the same time, reason unconnected with imagination and feeling denied the fullness of the human being. He continued, in part, to maintain this position in his mature years. Imagination was required to keep rational inquiry alive. Still, reason and the imagination must collide, and human beings must suffer, before a third stage in the evolution of the human mind and Spirit is reached—the modern stage in which philosophy will have, like Hegel himself, reached maturity.[69] The philosophers of the Enlightenment, by possessing only a reduced idea of reason, a reason that was founded on the free, rational human will, which is bound only to finite things and ignores the connections between the finite and the infinite, denied the reality of spirit and brought Europe so much suffering. The Enlightenment's certainty in the capacity of human reason was mistaken, though it constituted a step towards a fuller understanding of the reason as Spirit. Only when the links are acknowledged will human beings see that the world is a manifestation of a higher reason, of spirit, indeed of life. Hegel's concept of the dialectic whereby one necessarily historic stage gives way to another, though without leaving it totally behind—a process which he termed *Aufhebung*—recognizes historic necessity. In a sense, therefore, his philosophy of history does not eschew the notion of progress. He did not, however, judge or moralize it. Thus, he did not repudiate the Enlightenment as much as to take it beyond its original parameters.

Imagination, in the earliest stage in which human beings apprehend the world, fulfills their need for the familiar, which serves to protect them from

fears and perils. Hence, they worshipped and honored their various deities. Enlightenment begins with a rejection of these clusters of unexamined belief. "For anyone who begins to be enlightened, i.e., to demand universality for the laws of his intellect and his experience, ... it (the greater part of the Old Testament), is in the main unpalatable."[70] It was so unpalatable that Hegel easily, even eagerly, denounced Jews, not only as obstinately "remain[ing] on [their] solitary pinnacle," but slavishly and minutely obedient to their laws, which did not save them from becoming a dismembered people. But, from their plight, some tried to gain a sense of selfhood by surrendering in some instances to false Messiahs, in some other instances to join the Pharisee, Sadducean, and Essene sects; and, as time went by, they absorbed Platonism. Jesus failed to raise them above the corrupt Jewish law, "their deeply rooted national pride and ... hypocrisy and sanctimoniousness." It was truly remarkable, Hegel stated, for a Jew to possess religious purity. Jesus did, but his followers did not give up their dependence on trivialities, and they soon followed the Lord slavishly and, thus, failed to follow his example.[71]

The history of the Jews, beginning with Abraham, is a sorry story of isolation. Abraham severed "the bonds of communal life and love."[72] A wandering shepherd, he never settled down to cultivate the soil or to cultivate the friendship of others. He sought to master the world, but could not do so, and fell back on what Hegel calls the Ideal, "the Idea, ... and since its divinity was rooted in his contempt for the whole world, he remained its only favorite." He shut out the others in the world. Even when his descendants were able to come closer to their ideal, when they used their power to actualize their idea of unity, they ruled "with the most revolting and harshest tyranny." Jewish liberation from the Egyptian pharaohs was a false freedom, first, because Moses laid upon his people a new yoke, and, second, because they were ready to return to their Egyptian masters whenever difficulties or dangers threatened them. Theirs is a "universal enmity;" their surrender to promises of milk and honey constitutes their true selves; their materialism, their total physical dependence shields them from truth: "But how could they have an inkling of beauty who saw in everything only matter? How could they exercise reason and freedom who were only either mastered or masters?"[73] The state of independence for the Jews was totally passive, a state of "total ugliness."[74] For their independence was, in reality, bondage to their laws. This made them obstinate in their worship, for it was the only thing left to them. There is nothing tragic about them. They do not inspire terror or pity, only horror.[75] It was not only their renunciation of nature that put them beyond the pale. German particularity could never, Hegel said confidently, attain "the degree of madness encountered in the Jewish nation, which is incapable of uniting with others in common social intercourse."[76]

We seem to be revisiting some of Voltaire's reasons for rejecting Judaism, and somewhat like Voltaire, who asked Isaac de Pinto to put philosophy

first, Hegel recognized the claims of his contemporary, Mendelssohn to be a philosopher, citing him rather disingenuously in support of his contention that the Jews obeyed only commands and saw no reason to pursue truth.[77] Hegel, in the *Philosophy of Right*, however, rethought his earlier hostility towards the Jews. A civil society could not permanently exclude certain people on the grounds that "they are not like us." The state, in assuming the task of preserving the foundations of civil society, must find prudent and dignified means to recognize that man as man possesses feelings of self-hood. For these reasons, Jews must be included. So must Quakers and Anabaptists be part of civil society, even if they exempted themselves from serving the state in time of war. If the inclusion of any of these groups was injurious to the state, they might be excluded, but, while Hegel called these examples anomalies that deserved the state's barest toleration, he seemed less sure about making specific examples of them. Moreover, the Jews had long ceased being a nomadic people, living on a low level of civilization and, therefore, deserved a place in civil society.[78]

Nietzsche was one of Enlightenment's least consistent defenders, and his support was hardly unqualified. The German philosophers, whom he attacked, preferred, he said, concepts to explanations; the historians and romantics of the early part of the century retreated into folklore, the medieval world and oriental asceticism; and scientists of the same period "fought against the spirit of Voltaire and, like Goethe and Schopenhauer, sought to restore the idea of a divine or diabolical nature suffused with ethical and symbolic significance." Even more damning in the German tendency against the Enlightenment and against the revolution in society, "was that it (the revolution) was crudely understood as its (the Enlightenment's) consequence." Those who gave themselves over to pieties of all kinds betrayed the Enlightenment, and Nietzsche strongly implied that the links between enlightenment and revolution were tenuous and those facts and events that supposedly linked them were the least expected, because the relationship was a mental construct removed from reality. Furthermore, "The cult of feeling was erected in place of the cult of reason." Obviously, neither reason nor feeling, as they had been elevated to occupy the whole of life, was the direction for humankind. There were signs, however, of a correction. The study of history had in fact risen above its earlier missteps. It had taken on, he had written in his earlier *Human, All Too Human*:

> a new nature and now fl[ies] on the broadest wings above and beyond [its] former conjurors as [a] new and stronger geni[us] of *that very Enlightenment* against which [it was] first conjured up. This Enlightenment we must now carry further forward: let us not worry about the 'great revolution' and the 'great reaction' against it which have taken place—they are no more than the sporting of waves in comparison with the truly great flood which bears us along.[79]

The triumph of Judaism in the French Revolution—he does not pause to explain the connection—over the classical ideal was momentary. He lavished praise on Napoleon, a necessary step in the progress towards the "synthesis of the *inhuman* and *superhuman*."[80] He admired Voltaire, whose "moderate nature, inclined as it was to ordering, purifying and reconstructing" he contrasted with Rousseau whose "passionate follies and half-lies . . . called forth the optimistic spirit of the Revolution against which," he exclaimed, "I cry: '*Ecrasez l'infâme*!' It is this spirit that has for a long time banished *the spirit of the Enlightenment and of progressive evolution*: let us each of us within himself—whether it is possible to call it back!"[81]

He also took aim not only at Rousseau, but also at Kant, by using his hatred of the former to get at the latter's belief that the "moral realm" could not be assailed by reason. Kant was:

> the true son of his century . . . the century of enthusiasm: as he fortunately remained also in regard to its more valuable aspects (for example in the good portion of sensism he took over into his theory of knowledge). He too had been bitten by the moral tarantula Rousseau, he too harbored in the depths of his soul the idea of that moral fanaticism whose executor another disciple of Rousseau felt and confessed himself to be, namely Robespierre.[82]

He continued to admire Voltaire, and, quite correctly saw in him, as Voltaire saw himself, in Nietzsche's words, the "afterglow" of the seventeenth century—the century of "men of a noble culture"—which, as we recall, was for the sage of Ferney the starting point of French grandeur of spirit.[83] But while he paid homage to Voltaire and while his detestation of the Revolution did not waver, did he shift ground in *Beyond Good and Evil*, and declare himself an opponent of the Enlightenment? It may seem so. To the Enlightenment, for example, he attributed the false emancipation of women, false because their freedom was not real. Before the Revolution women had genuine influence. Since then, as their rights and claims increased, their defeminization led to falsity in relations between men and women and to the emasculation of the human species.[84] On the other hand, he defended the Enlightenment. "Enlightenment enrages," he said, suggesting, in his comparison with the opposed values of Rome and Christianity, that the "slaves," who rebelled against the men of the Enlightenment who declared themselves free from faith, were driven by brute passions just as the slaves of the Roman Empire revenged themselves against "its noble and frivolous tolerance." The skepticism that infused aristocratic morality and denied the suffering of the masses was no small cause of "the last great slave rebellion which began with the French Revolution."[85] Yet in the Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*, he identified as the two great prisoners of humanity, "Jesuitism," and later "the democratic enlightenment which, with the aid of freedom of the press and newspaper-reading, might indeed bring it about that the spirit would no

longer experience itself so easily as a 'need.'" This "democratic enlightenment" might, however, be the last spurt of the old Europe, giving rise to a continent of "good Europeans," neither Jesuit nor democratic.[86] It is clear that to the end he distinguished between Voltaire's Enlightenment and the Enlightenment of the democratic Rousseau. The Rousseauian turn prevailed and the chaos of the Terror that it let loose was, in his view, the antithesis of the Enlightenment that he cherished. He did not, however, follow in the footsteps of Burke, Maistre, and Bonald and condemn the Enlightenment as the intellectual breeding ground of revolutionary action, and who tirelessly attacked Voltaire as the chief culprit.

It was another kind of Enlightenment he sought, one that turned away from universal reason as a misleading fantasy, one that would divest itself of the crippling offspring of *ressentiment*, such as the false and degrading sentiments of liberalism, democracy, and socialism. He looked forward to a new Enlightenment. Time would obliterate the traces of revolution and reaction and usher in a new and more powerful Enlightenment, relieved of its old baggage, of its total confidence in reason and false feeling. Nietzsche was pronouncing on reason's limitations, already insisting that it had to be subject to critique if it were not to deteriorate into an unexamined shibboleth.

Jews would occupy a special place in this future. They would either become Europe's masters or lose Europe as their ancestors had lost Egypt. Since the eighteenth century, they had emerged from, but did not leave behind, their exclusive loyalties to their community, as the trails they blazed rested on a great fund of historic memory. They had transformed their submissiveness and their despised money lending into "a feeling of power and of eternal revenge." It would have been hard for them to hang on to their self-respect without "being able to practice requital," just as "our respect for ourselves" is a universal human need. In spite of their past, they are liberal souls with the largest experience of human society. They are intellectually shrewd and supple, ready to shed their submissiveness, and to join the best and most inventive minds—the true European aristocracy. Confident in their newly found nobility of purpose, they will transform their spirit of revenge for the wrongs done them by gaining distinction in all of life's pursuits:

> When the Jews can exhibit as their work such jewels and golden vessels . . . when Israel will have transformed its eternal vengeance into an eternal blessing for Europe: then there will again arrive that seventh day on which the ancient Jewish God may *rejoice* in himself, his creation and his chosen people—and let us all, all of us, rejoice with him![87]

This, one of the two most extended passages Nietzsche devoted to the Jews, and certainly a rhapsodic one, should not only be contrasted with his disdain

for the Germans. It recognizes the Jews as the exemplars of modernity, and the Germans as foot-draggers, protesting their fidelity to the *volk*, which descended into strident nationalism. Jews, however, chose the liberal creed, which proved to be a frail reed against it.

In his second panegyric—not without its curious asides—Nietzsche, under a rubric he entitled, *European man and the abolition of nations*, looked forward to a time beyond national hostilities that served only dynastic rivalries and certain classes of business and society, It was time to become a "*good European*," and the Germans, he said, being good mediators, could be helpful. Jews were the chief sufferers of the nation-state. But because of:

> their energy and higher intelligence, their capacity in will and spirit accumulated from generation to generation in a long school of suffering, [they] must come to preponderate to a degree calculated to arouse envy and hatred, so that in almost every nation—and the more so the more nationalist a posture the nation is again adopting—there is gaining ground the literary indecency of leading the Jews to the sacrificial slaughter as scapegoats for every possible public or private misfortune. As soon as it is no longer a question of the conserving of nations but of the strongest possible European mixed race, the Jew will be just as usable and desirable as an ingredient of it as any other national residue. Every nation, every man, possesses unpleasant indeed dangerous qualities: it is cruel to demand that the Jew should constitute an exception. In him these qualities may even be dangerous and repellent to an exceptional degree; and perhaps the youthful stock-exchange Jew is the most repulsive invention of the entire human race, Nonetheless I should like to know how much must, in a total accounting, be forgiven a people who, not without us all being to blame, have had the most grief-laden history of any people and whom we have to thank for the noblest human being (Christ), the purest sage (Spinoza), the mightiest book and the most efficacious moral code in the world. Moreover: in the darkest periods of the Middle Ages, when the cloudbanks of Asia had settled low over Europe, it was the Jewish freethinkers, scholars and physicians who, under the harshest personal constraint, held firmly to the banner of enlightenment and intellectual independence and defended Europe against Asia; it is thanks not least to their efforts that a more natural, rational and in any event unmythical elucidation of the world could at last again obtain victory and the ring of culture that now unites us with the enlightenment of Graeco-Roman antiquity remain unbroken. If Christianity has done everything to orientalize the occident, Judaism has always played an essential part in occidentalizing it again: which in a certain sense means making of Europe's mission and history a *continuation of the Greek*.[88]

Thus, the divisions between Enlighteners and anti-Enlighteners, we may see once more, are neither obvious nor clear. In the generations that followed, their real divisions and similarities were made more manifest. It has been claimed that the enemies of the Enlightenment made a lasting contribution to a reconsideration of modernity's roots and evils, namely, the secularization of society, thereby laying bare "the cultural costs of disenchantment." In addition, this critique is said to have shown how reason subverted faith. The argument is far from new or startling. In the litany of complaints against the Enlightenment, the French Right and its counterparts elsewhere in the world are candid in their anti-Jewish postures, when they link Jews wherever they are to a conspiracy against order and authority. What is purported to be new is that the counter-Enlightenment is in reality as modern as the Enlightenment, and that its credo is to be understood as, and flows from, a common dialogic process in which *philosophes* and anti-*philosophes* and Revolutionaries and counter-Revolutionaries took part. It was in terms of their hostile encounters during the Revolution that the opponents in a sense invented the other, but to see the clash only in this way seems to minimize the independent and prior existence of the Enlightenment, even while such an interpretation acknowledges that the mutual reifications are distorting. Such a reconstruction may indeed pay more homage to symmetry than it does to historic reality.[89] In the anti-Enlightenment discourse on the deleterious effect of modernization, the transformation of social mores, the ephemeral and shocking imbalance of the benefits of capitalism, and a preference for smaller, rather than larger, forms of organized life, there is, as I suggested earlier, a kinship between Left and Right which endures to this day, and resists, I would think, a simple modernist label, if there is any life left in the idea of social amelioration—one of the hallmarks of modernity.

Radical elements on the Left and the Right both labor under a thick veil of ambivalence. The Radical Left has revived and embellished its traditional image of "authentic" melioristic social transformation based on the supposed regenerative power inherent in the small social and economic units that constitute civil society, as if they will undo the most egregious effects of mature capitalism. The Radical Right also decries the dehumanizing effects of unquestioning loyalty to individualism and consumerism, but nevertheless pursues them full tilt. The ambiguity on the Right is seen in its amalgam of capitalism and religious conformity. It is around the focal point of capitalism that the two extremes circle. It is, however, embarrassing to both sides to point out this out. Each makes efforts to distance itself from the other. On what grounds do they justify their mutual dislikes? The answer is not always clear. The Radical Left rejoins more moderate voices on the Left and liberalism to reemphasize the benefits of tolerance, and adds its support for social legislation aimed at the expansion of human rights. However, it is not unambiguously in favor of multiculturalism, as, in its recognition of traditionalist cultures, it may, in its more egregious

enforcement of cultural rights, threaten class solidarity. Michael Walzer, who has a finger on the pulse of the Left, both at its Radical end and in its liberal middle, is most worried about the "inner oppressiveness of traditional cultures."[90] The power that traditional cultures have to demand loyalty from the oppressed people they serve is, in fact, he argues, their fallback position: they see no way out of their social and economic powerlessness, and they find in their parochialism and particularism whatever comforts they need to shield them from the blasts of hopelessness. Only by translating their group loyalties into civil action with the aid of governments will they, like American Jews,[91] who have built a powerful organizational life, gain full access to civil and political society. Walzer's plea throws retrospective light on the dilemmas that faced Jews seeking to become part of mainstream society. The Enlightenment assumed, if not an entirely smooth transition to liberal ideals and a more just social future, a relatively bloodless one. That promise has been fulfilled for the most part in America, but not elsewhere.

Even in America, however, the Right aims to restore traditional religious values, on the grounds that they symbolize, and also embody, a vanished world, but a better world that might yet, and should, be brought back to life. These are the grounds upon which it makes its case. The Right in America today constitutes a coalition of Christian denominations that hitherto would have been thought unimaginable. The picture becomes even more complex if note is taken—and it is inescapable—that the more radical elements on the Right bring out an additional weapon that makes them strange, but not always welcome, allies of religious Jews. Indeed, Protestant fundamentalists seem to have taken the lead in opposing Enlightenment values. They join the most uncompromising Orthodox Jews in their defense of traditional religiosity and anti-secularism. The former see the Enlightenment and the latter view the Haskallah as initiating a loss of faith, on the one hand, and commitment to modernity, on the other. A Jewish counter-Enlightenment exists alongside the more general one. And the more irrepressible fundamentalists from the Christian and Orthodox Jewish camps use each other, the first to welcome the promise of the Second Coming in Israel, which will see the Jews convert or face eternal damnation, the second to preserve biblical Judaism against internal secularists and against Israel's external enemies.

How can the Enlightenment be rescued and strengthened in the face of an unmistakably emotionally charged revolt against modernity and scientific rationality, which is its dominant feature, and make critique a weapon to pry open the premises of dogma? Let us recall that the use of the word "critique" was Bayle's in the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* in 1697, and was meant to convey, when linked with reason, an unflinching examination of the claims of revelation. But Bayle transformed critique "as *method* to critique as *principle*," taking it "beyond philological criticism" in search of truth that will, in the course of communication, be expanded as one error

follows another into oblivion.[92] Even as Voltaire proved to be inconsistent in his uses of critique, and whatever the twentieth century revealed about its failure to examine itself both as a method and as a principle, it remains the foundation upon which hope rests for revitalizing the Enlightenment project.

Whether in its Voltairean or later incarnations, reason does not, however, weigh quickly or heavily against its foes if it fails to see that the fear inspiring religious groups and the pessimism of disadvantaged groups that look to religion as a haven are real, and will not be mollified either by ignoring their roots, or without a critical reevaluation of critique itself. The passion that inspired "Ecrasez l'infame!" and continues to this day has not diminished the passion on the other side.

That passion burns brightly in both camps, and should not be denied in self-righteous indignation by those who are the standard-bearers of reason, lest they miss the chance of regenerating it, is Walzer's argument in his effort to find a fresh basis for liberal pluralistic democracy. It would be "nice if all the coexisting cultural groups were liberal, open, and non-hierarchical associations." But it is best to get rid of fantasies, to understand the realities of politics, and to concede (as generously as possible) that "[p]luralism makes for difference—or conversely, it is existing differences that make pluralism necessary."[93] Walzer leaves no doubt that the most compelling and incomparable determinants of a society are its particular features, whatever it is that they choose to identify as singular, and not the less visible and less tangible loyalties that are attached to the notion of a general humanity.

Societies are necessarily particular, because, Walzer goes on to tell us, they have members with memories not only of their own, but also of their, common life. Humanity, by contrast, has members but no memory, and so it has no history and no culture, no customary practices, no familiar lifeways, no festivals, no shared understandings of social goods. It is human to have such things, but there is no single way of having them. At the same time, the members of all the different societies, because they are human, can acknowledge each other's different ways, respond to each other's cries for help, learn from each other, and march (sometimes) in each other's parades.[94] The lesson is as old as those of Rousseau and Herder, and close to a conservative's renderings, like Oakeshott's, we may recall. In the heated political atmosphere of the twenty-first century it echoes ironically, but it reverberates even more bitterly, because Voltaire, one of the other pillars of the Enlightenment, described and welcomed early and non-European cultures so intelligently and so generously, but could not do the same for Judaism. Voltaire's openness to other cultures may be seen as a defense of the cosmopolitan ideal, which cannot be sustained except in tandem with the liberal principle of tolerance, but it must remain a principle that cannot be stretched so far as to countenance an uncritical toleration of intolerance. To embrace such a position is to set the conditions for a reaffirmation of

the Enlightenment project, whereby the universal is "possible only from the standpoint of the particular," and that to be considered in that way is to acknowledge that "cosmopolitanism is 'rooted' in particular experiences." Unfortunately, Stephen Bronner reduces a complex human dialectic to what he calls a "truism," and tends to underestimate its difficulties.[95]

Jonathan Israel has set his sights on an even more ambitious goal—no less than a radical reworking of the Enlightenment's origins and transformations. It is as if he is describing a *dérapage*, a rupture, or a derailment, with far-reaching political and social consequences. While Bronner and other like-minded Enlightenment partisans celebrate its liberal side, just as political theorists, such as Stephen Smith, see Spinoza as a liberal in the making, Israel believes that the history of the Enlightenment, as well as its meaning in our own time, must be put straight by placing Spinoza, the Spinozists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and radical anti-Voltaireans, such as Diderot, Helvétius, d'Holbach and Condorcet in its true vanguard, because they advocated equality, equity, and democracy, against the conservatism of Locke, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Hume, and Kant.[96] Israel has a clear message. Polemicist as well as historian he may be, but so are critics of the Enlightenment. He is also, as an ardent universalist, an enlightener who crosses continents and finds its moral message in China and other non-Western parts of the world. If the democratic, egalitarian, and libertarian Radical Enlightenment fails or is defeated, he says, it will not only be to the detriment of philosophy but also of the humanities.[97]

The philosopher he very briefly alludes to as a thinker, who had a more judicious and accurate understanding of the Enlightenment, is Bernard Williams. His last philosophic study on truth took up the question of reason and critique, but in fact he did so much earlier. A point Israel does not take up in his reference to Williams is that there is no way to apply the critical principle whereby one might be able to choose between rational and irrational forms of persuasion: the force of reason cannot be separated from the power of persuasion.[98] More significant, however, is that Williams wrote as a liberal, not as a radical universalist. Liberalism, in his view of it, as a legacy of the Enlightenment, may be an illusion, but it is nevertheless part of reality.[99] That may be said of Israel's reading of the Enlightenment's radical message as well, in which case we may conclude that we are reduced to testing our luck by giving our support to one of the illusions in the hope that it will have positive results. More in line with the themes of the present study is Williams' identification of the Enlightenment "with ideas of total critique and rationalistic images of society." And just as interesting is his warning against treating human beings as abstractions, sundered from real social relations, instead of beings formed by society, "as people who owe their ethical identities to the world in which they have grown up."[100] The risk here, Williams quickly adds, is living with another illusion that entails a loss. Unfortunately, he does not clarify what such a loss would be, except that some form of human payment would be exacted to achieve a harmonious

identity between self and society. Much of this is reminiscent of the older, yet still enormously pertinent, conflicts between the concepts of the particular and the universal that found Voltaire and Rousseau on different sides. It also reminds us of the critical spirit that Bayle championed and that Voltaire took up with a different purpose in mind.

The local, the ethnic, and the particular have their limits, as well as their intolerances, but they must be taken seriously. In Part I, note was taken, first, of Voltaire's observation that strong feelings for strangers were difficult to summon, and, secondly, his apothegm that only the person who showed indifference to his country could call himself, or be called, a universal citizen. Julia Kristeva has no hesitations. Her readiness to live as one in a postmodern world is noted by Walzer as an object lesson to underline how being a stranger to one's own identity as a member of a group, clan, and so on, demands forging a new one "through lucidity rather than fate," but that such a move would in fact create a different kind of community, but a community nevertheless.[101] We seem, after all, not to have strayed so far from Voltaire, whose longing for such a community to replace all older ones would, he reckoned, improve the human condition.

# 7 Jewish identity and the Jewish question: the power of ancestral voices in a post-Enlightenment age

## Out of the Ghetto, Into the Nation-State

The movement towards emancipation and assimilation did not end on a happy note and, contrary to expectations, the arrow did not point in one direction. Arguing rightly for a qualitative distinction between Voltaire's hostility towards Jews and the diverse currents of anti-Semitism that ended in their near extermination almost two centuries later, Roland Mortier nevertheless leaves the question suspended in mid-air. He puts the sage of Ferney's "wish" for emancipation on the same plane as his struggle to hasten the liberation of French minds from the oppressive power of Catholicism. Voltaire was confident that freedom, when it came, would be the prelude to Jewish emancipation, that the one would follow from the other, that Judaism was, in its exclusiveness, suspect, and an obstacle to a superior universalism.[1] Yet, by not probing deeper into the concept of universalism, which Mortier asserts was Voltaire's ideal, and, indeed, the goal of others in our contemporary world, he, like Voltaire, cannot deal with assimilationism, which Voltaire saw as the first and vital step that would be the desirable end to the "Jewish Question." By its very nature, universalism, which is hard to define and lacks a solid base for purposeful action, blithely ignores differences, as if they were something you leave behind once you enter the hallowed halls of a common humanity. Thus, while he approvingly cites Jacob Katz, who writes that "it was inherent in Jewish existence that emancipation was an important step in their history . . . [which] has not in the least reached its end," Mortier might also have resisted the temptation to leave these questions to the infallibility of history and instead tried to suggest how Jews and non-Jews might recognize that the kind of emancipation, which heralds universalism as its goal, will not mean the erasure of the passions that inform and complicate their lives.[2] In the aftermath of the first steps taken towards emancipation, ethnic nationalists in the nineteenth century created new markers of identity to challenge the universal ideals of the Enlightenment, and, at the same time, to protect and extend a national and exclusivist solidarity. As targets, they chose Jews whom they saw as incorporating the double stain of a lifeless universalism and of a peculiar, mysterious, and dangerous particu-

larism. For Jews, the choice between their particularism and the presumed moral superiority of universalism was self-consciously determined. It meant for those who took this route escape from a restricted family environment, an education not circumscribed by religion, and it promised a progressive future, releasing them from a cyclical one. It was an intensely practical decision, as it entailed family rupture, the choice of new identities for their children, as well as their own. Such choices placed the individual self at the center of the dilemma, not the community. Soon after having made these leaps in to the future, they encountered the tribalism of modern nationalism and, in the generations to come, some found their way back to the tribe to protect themselves in a hostile world.

Tracing the origins of the nation-state back to the French Revolution, Hannah Arendt writes:

> The tragedy of the nation-state was that the people's rising national consciousness interfered with these functions [the state, 'as a supreme legal institution' with the 'supreme function' to protect all inhabitants in its territory no matter what their nationality]. In the name of the will of the people the state was forced to recognize only 'nationals' as citizens, to grant full civil and political rights only to those who belonged to the national community by right of origin and fact of birth. This meant that the state was partly transformed from an instrument of the law into an instrument of the nation. . . . The secret conflict between state and nation came to light at the very birth of the modern nation-state, when the French Revolution combined the Declaration of the Rights of Man with the demand for national sovereignty. . . . The practical outcome of this contradiction was that from then on human rights were protected and enforced only as national rights.[3]

A mental kinship thus exists across the centuries between Voltaire's notions of Judaism in its biblical and post-biblical periods and those of thinkers, Jewish and non-Jewish, who are still struggling with the paradoxes of Jewishness in the aftermath of the Enlightenment's promise to include all of humanity in a world less troubled than in the past by religious differences and the civil wars they helped engender at the level both of the nation-state and of rivalries among nations. Prospects of a broader inclusivity were encouraged by the ascending importance of science and a perceptible decline in the power of religious confession. Science and the secular disciplines were embraced enthusiastically as the continuation of Enlightenment. When these ideals began to find a receptive ear among Jewish elites, they, and, to a much smaller degree, the wider Jewish communities, asked, as we saw in the last chapter, how they could benefit from enlightened reforms in the laws and policies that had been previously indifferent and hostile to their fate. Coupled with this question—as yet only dimly perceived as a realistically practical departure from centuries of obloquy—

was another: how would any new turn away from persecution affect future qualifications for membership in the Jewish community, on the one hand, and, on the other, fuller membership in mainstream society? These questions were related to the older Jewish debates on the nature of apostasy and heresy, and were, in this period of questing and questioning, on the threshold of taking on new meanings.

Jewishness, as a matter of choosing and identifying the values by which to lead a life, rather than seeking to identify an absolute essence that would define the Jew, was of course not on the scoreboard until there was serious discussion of emancipation at the end of the eighteenth century. The journey began, it might be said, in Spinoza's time, when the rabbinical debates over apostasy and heresy were meant to preserve the traditional criteria that determined Jewish identity. The post-Enlightenment movement within Judaism predicted an advance towards further secularization without, however, dislodging Jews who clung to their older loyalties. At the present time, Jews, except for members of the ultra-orthodox community, recognize the fact of co-existing Jewish denominations and recognize also other Jews who belong to none. The question of identity was almost without exception determined historically and with apparent objectivity, that is, by such facts as the nature of Jewish descent or sincere conversion. One does not have to be a practicing Jew to be Jewish, because, in fact, Jewish law dictates that, as long as one is born of a Jewish mother, one is Jewish, and that, furthermore, the individual in question does not belong to any other religion. In these conditions, Jews were not required to have knowledge of doctrine, nor even to articulate their faith. Jewishness for communitarians, on the other hand, is defined as a given, not as a choice. Jews and Gentiles alike may fail to acknowledge the diversity of Jewish experience and may subsume it under prescribed community standards by means of which they judge one another and are judged. In short, the standards are absolute. Matters become complicated, when the spokesmen of organized Judaism claim to speak on behalf of all Jews. They consider themselves and are considered as an umbrella group inclusive of a variety of subgroups. The point is that the institutionalized arm of Judaism becomes for large numbers of Jews the voice of a united community. The ultra-orthodox, the Lubavitcher, for example, do not countenance individual Jewish voices at odds with the absolute demands of strict observance of all of God's commandments and laws. The absolute believers cannot admit Jewish relativism just as they abhor it outside the professed faith.

It is hard to argue that Jews in today's advanced liberal democracies are the helpless victims they once were, though doubtless some see themselves as the targets of new and fearful waves of anti-Semitism. As I write, its presence in the Muslim, particularly in the Middle Eastern, parts of the globe, where a chronic state of war continues to fester and erupts in daily acts of violence, cannot be ignored. It is in France, with the largest Jewish population in Europe, where a new kind of anti-Semitism has been brewing, that Jews

experience and respond to in various ways, while the non-Jewish population registers various degrees of alarm. In France, Muslim immigrants and their French-born children outnumber Jews by some ten to one, and, since their arrival in great numbers after the Algerian War, have gained recognition as a distinct religious and social community. The demographic changes have been accompanied by changes that, in the impassioned view of Alain Finkielkraut, are threatening to turn the French Republican model upside down, and are giving free rein to an alliance of multiculturalists that takes its cues from a new radical Left. Life for Jews in a multicultural France would not be possible, he believes, as such a country would no longer be a nation, and because the power of anti-Jewish groups would be enhanced. He poses a continuity between the new and the old Left that, in its initial ambivalence, bordered on hostility to the Jews, and, which, but for Jean Jaurès, almost failed to come to the defense of the Jewish population during the deadliest phases of the Dreyfus Affair. He also recalls that Jews responded to the crisis facing them and the Republic with their own hesitations. He is adamantly opposed to the Left's new incarnation, which, he claims, devotes its aims and policies, not merely to assure rights to immigrant groups that do not respect Western traditions, but makes special efforts to grant them privileges beyond and above those granted to generations of past immigrants. The realization of such goals would subvert, among other things, the Republican values of the Declaration of Rights of Man and the Citizen, as well as the principles of *laicité*. Moreover, it does so in the name of a false humanism. These developments are, for Finkielkraut, a huge backward step. In a summary statement, he compacts much European and Jewish history into a few words:

> Perhaps there is a resonance of the Epistle to the Romans in the affirmation that the people of Israel, that self-infatuated people, exempt themselves from the ordinary human condition and except themselves from all the other nations, thus denying the equal dignity of men and obeying only their own laws. Perhaps this sudden condemnation coming from the religion of humanity, and its paradoxical incitement to anti-racist hatred, unknowingly resurrects an ancient theological debate of which the secularized masses know little or nothing at all. Perhaps—and this is a frightening thought—the penitent judges are incapable of condemning the scientistic belief in the struggle of the races and the survival of the fittest without resuscitating the Pauline spirit. Perhaps this is what makes the descendants of Abraham stiffen their resolve, affirming their dynastic birthright and holding firm to ties of blood when they are offered a union of hearts.[4]

Finkielkraut's main target, laden with irony, is what he regards as the feeble intellectual underpinnings of those he calls the new humanists. Perhaps, as well, there is concealed in his contempt the historic fact that the Epistle to the Romans prefigures Voltaire's impatience with Jewish self-chosenness.

Voltaire hated it, not least because the Pauline spirit was bred in his bone by his Jesuit education, which taught him to detest Jewish arrogance.

Even if legal and social practices in Western societies long acted as a bulwark against anti-Semitism's more virulent forms, it is clearly not absent and might conceivably become more pronounced as demographic change continues to alter once relatively homogeneous populations, perhaps dangerously. Finkielkraut has defined the new form of anti-Semitism more vehemently and more dramatically than other Jewish intellectuals. André Glucksmann, Bernard Henri-Lévy, and Bernard Kouchner have emerged as spokesmen for a conservative form of republicanism, which is the best way, they maintain, to reassert and revitalize the values of the Enlightenment. Taking the lead, Finkielkraut directs his barbs at the Left as the guardian of an invented past, its nostalgia for a lost, impossibly unrescuable world, its historic amnesia that lacks the critical intelligence to perceive the changes wrought by democracy, which erases legitimate differences, based on an educational system that used to reward merit and a political system that grants no privileges on grounds of religion. The Left, he declares, treats the memory of the Holocaust unfairly and indecently and abuses it by forgetting its true meaning. The Left has denounced him for what they believe are his apologetics for France's colonial past, his "racism," directed at Blacks and Muslims, his neo-conservatism, his betrayal of the Enlightenment, and his opposition to multiculturalism.

These opposing images of the Republic are deeply divisive and ugly. They may leave deep scars if the mixtures of peoples are not met with creative policies to make the new immigrants and their French-born children aware that they cannot assume that their future in France is reconcilable with all the commands of Islamic law. At the same time, anti-Jewish attacks must be rendered ineffective. In these troubled circumstances, Jews in France, especially, tend to turn to Israel as a refuge when matters worsen. Jews elsewhere also tend to side with Israel. Though many do so without supporting current Israeli policy, increasingly, they no longer find it easy to distinguish between anti-Semitism and an anti-Israeli stand. In France, however, Jews have for long adhered to a model of Jewish life that was sustained by a strong universalistic state. Pierre Birnbaum believes that Jews, committed to the Republican contract, are reluctant to take their place alongside other communitarian ethnic groups, and would be wise to seek to renew it by asking the state to take a more positive role in expanding the public sphere to reduce the power of separate groups to fracture political life and, thus, diminish the elements of risk not only for Jews but also for others.[5]

Thus, the power of the image of the victim and making it the core of a stable Jewish identity has not been extinguished, and, one must add, it still haunts American Jews and generates much heat and anguish among Jewish academics and intellectuals, chiefly around the question of how Jews in America respond or should respond to criticism of Israel.[6] Yet it is in America, especially, that Jews have melted into the mainstream more successfully than

in other parts of the Western world without losing their individual Jewish identities, whatever the pace of intermarriage. Indeed, some of the available evidence shows not only continuing loyalty to, but also a resumption of, Jewish communal life, including the rituals of observance. In part, this has been due to conditions peculiar to America from the beginning: the value it places on equality of opportunity, liberty and individualism, and, as well, the forging of a civic religion that on balance takes in newcomers (even if not always welcomingly)—a phenomenon that Tocqueville noticed with approval. In part, the renewed Jewish interest in preserving and strengthening the relics, however they are chosen, of a Jewish past, highlights the heterogeneous nature of Judaism, which, more than ever, has no fixed and permanent meaning. There are notable exceptions. Arthur Hertzberg did not accept so liberal a view. He passionately identified Judaism wholly with the stories and teachings of the Old Testament and the Talmud, declaring that the "essential Jewish character was already present … and formed in the person of Abraham," and was reinforced by "the indignities of exile" and "martyrdom rather than give up … faith in the one God."[7]

The hope of assimilation as an exit from Judaism has a short history, and the Nazis' nearly total extermination of the Jews—a killing machine with no exits of any kind—virtually rendered it a non-starter as an exit strategy, which was thought desirable and feasible a century or so earlier. Without the sinister meanings that were to be associated with it in Hitler's Germany, "On the Jewish Question" was the term Karl Marx used in an early essay, and made it the centerpiece of his analysis of the struggle for political assimilation, upon which Moses Mendelssohn and his heirs in the Haskalah had pinned their hopes (though not without differences among themselves). In one of Marx's earlier essays, "Spinoza's Theological-Political Treatise," which in reality consisted of notes on the *Treatise*, Marx apparently was looking back to a source that would influence his future philosophy.[8] Three years later, Marx, whose father was a son of the *Aufklärung*, anticipated Nietzsche's prophecy, as we may recall, that the national state would be superseded by a European entity that would continue the enlightenment of Greek–Roman civilization; and that the Jews would point the way. Marx was not dreaming of such a continuation, but he gave, as Nietzsche was to do, a key role to Jews in the modernization of the world. He announced confidently that, "The Jew has emancipated himself in a Jewish way not only by acquiring financial power but also because through him and apart from him money has become a world power and the practical Jewish spirit has become the spirit of the Christian peoples. The Jews have emancipated themselves in so far as the Christians have become Jews." Then would follow progress to the "final" stage, the stage of full human emancipation, that time in a Socialist world, when "society succeeds in abolishing the empirical essence of Judaism—the market and the conditions which give rise to it." In that world of total liberation, "the Jew will have become impossible. … The social emancipation of the Jew is the emancipation of

society from Judaism."[9] Such wishful thinking, self-deception, and simple wrong-headedness persisted among Marxists of many persuasions long after Marx passed from the scene, confusing Jews and non-Jews alike.

## 1944: Recognition and Reckoning

Echoes of this illusion, but suffused with unintentional bitter sweetness, were heard a century later in post-emancipation and post-Holocaust Europe. In 1944, voices, as if coming from a distant past, reminded the world of the Enlightenment principles of reason, science, and sensibility once again, but they did so with no trumpet blasts of confidence and approached them instead with shaded eye. Two years earlier, in German-occupied Paris, the Sorbonne chair of the history of Judaism was conferred on Henri Labroue, at one time an admirer of Voltaire's *Traité sur la tolérance*, now the author of *Voltaire antijuif*, a collection of extracts from Voltaire's writings on the ancient Hebrews that he pillaged to support the thesis of an unrepentant anti-Semitic Voltaire. Many of the selections were mutilated, while others omitted key passages; all of them distorted his ideas.[10] We may see how, in addition, he shamelessly exploited Bernard Lazare's ideas, suggesting that he spoke of the Jews who entered the nation as conquerors, who transformed all of France into an enormous vassal state, took over the country's politics and administration, confiscated its wealth, anaesthetized public opinion, and called on all the ghettos of the universe to strengthen their forces.[11] The Nazis encouraged the publication as proof that French culture was not immune from anti-Semitism. It won the applause of French fascists, but it was denounced by the Communist resistance in June 1942 in the pages of *L'Université libre*, as a disfigurement of Voltaire's thought, and the review recalled Voltaire's deflation of commonplaces and religious pieties. In the autumn of 1944, the editors of a revived *La Pensée* attacked Labroue for appropriating Voltaire as an intellectual ancestor of racism and consigned him and his book to oblivion where it had, they stated, languished from the beginning.[12]

Sartre might not have known of Labroue's book, but he could not have been unaware of both the 1942 denunciation and the editorial in *La Pensée*. He was one of the voices that emerged from the shadows in the waning months of the war. But his was not the most compelling. When he wrote his short book, *Réflexions sur la question juive* in 1944, which was published two years later,[13] France was emerging from its humiliating defeat, and, celebrating, in the guise of a misunderstood and maligned heroic country, its role as a leader of the resistance against Nazism *par excellence*, and thus avoided the deepest questions raised by collaboration and the Jewish deportations. The devastations of the Holocaust were already known, even if not fully, and it would take some years before its total dimensions became a focal point for debate on the meaning of the Jewish genocide, especially as controversy was to grow and swirl around the claims that it was unique and

incommensurable. Although these airings would bring new perspectives to the question of Jewish identity and Jewish survival in a complex community of believing and non-believing Jews alike, Sartre's analysis of anti-Semitism as a manifestation of the "fear of the human condition,"[14] and his reflections on the "inauthentic" Jew who makes himself the object of disdain and hatred, have not lost all of their bite, even if he framed these questions rather abstractly and sometimes injudiciously. He exposed some of the roots of the enmities that some non-Jews still harbored against Jews. But he can be criticized for setting forth, as if following in some of Voltaire's footsteps, an essentialist view of Jews. But, unlike Voltaire who did not rest his essentialist case on biology, Sartre seemed to do so. Even if he did so unwittingly, he presented what can only be regarded as a racist view of Jews, including such assertions as Jewish "biological and hereditary facts which we have accepted as incontestable."[15] These are indeed thinly clad stereotypes, prompting Harold Rosenberg, one of Sartre's first challengers, to write in *Commentary*, the journal of the American Jewish Committee:

> Since the Jew possesses a unique identity which springs from his origin and his story, it is possible for him to be every kind of man—rationalist, irrationalist, heroic or cowardly, Zionist or good European—and still be a Jew. The Jew exists but there are no Jewish traits … Whatever it (Jewishness) is, the desire to assimilate is not 'inauthentic'; one may choose to suppress the past in oneself or to surpass it. On the other hand, the Jewish identity is a remarkable richness for those who rediscover it within themselves.[16]

Even more egregiously, Sartre seems to have transformed himself into an anti-Semite in the conclusion to his book, where he reproduces some alarming anti-Semitic portraits of Jews accepting some of the most absurd notions that there was a fixed Jewish way of thinking.[17] Another critic supported this reading of Sartre and pointed out further that he unquestioningly absorbed stereotypes that were current in his social and intellectual milieu, so much so that he did not question the use of the locution, the "Jewish Question," a term of opprobrium that was exploited, not only in Nazi Germany, but in France during the Third Republic and more famously under Vichy, forgetting, however, that its provenance is older and had been used for some time without much fuss.[18]

These are damning charges. They are a sharp rebuke to Sartre's existentialist philosophy, and cannot be ignored if we wish to gain a clearer picture of how some of his notions led to a serious misunderstanding of the meaning of Jewishness. For him, the Jew is constantly confronted by a moral choice between authenticity—the Jew realizing his condition as a Jew, and hence asserting his freedom—and its opposite, inauthenticity. The choice will nevertheless fail, he added, to free him completely from the realities of the socio-political world in which he lives. Authenticity for Sartre

meant being the author of, and assuming responsibility for, oneself. In urging Jews to seek out their authenticity, he conceded, on the one hand, the objective constraints on absolute freedom of choice, and, on the other hand, he appeared to argue against the imperatives of such constraints, as if they could be dispensed with ease. More seriously, he prescribed for Jews what should ideally be a shared, reciprocal, and symmetrical responsibility, involving all members of society, and he proved to be insensitive to the ways in which Jews could rightly question and, in the great majority of cases, reject a single notion of what it might mean to live as an "authentic Jew," for that is what he appears to have had in mind, ignoring the fact that Jews drew distinctions that separated them from other Jews. He ought to have known better, but it seems that his direct experience of Jews and Jewishness was as meager as Voltaire's.

Nevertheless, in the 1960s, the argument for authenticity inspired a young Alain Finkielkraut, who was able to define himself without bad faith as a Jew, to discover how his Jewishness stretched back to his own past as a Jewish child.[19] At that time, he was critical of Israeli society for turning its back on the Jewish past in Europe. Fifty or so years after Sartre's book appeared, André Aciman saw the problem of authenticity quite differently. He makes the point that the verb "assimilate" has an additional meaning—to become similar to, to simulate. He thinks of himself as a "paradoxical" Jew and reminds us that the question of authenticity will not by itself solve the problem of anti-Semite and Jew: "[N]o Jew can ever be authentically Jewish, once he steps out of the ghetto."[20] As a Jew who has lived in different cultures, Egyptian, French, and American among them, he echoes the views of Jews, who once having tasted emancipation, affirmed either tenuously or more firmly their identities both as individuals and as members of discrete groups, whether Jewish or non-Jewish.[21]

Beyond that unexplored territory, Sartre neglected the larger problem: a consideration of how peoples of diverse traditions and beliefs could indeed begin to act authentically with one another. His resounding words, "Authenticity, it is almost needless to say, consists in having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks that it involves, in accepting it in pride or humiliation, sometimes in horror and hate," do not rise above other pieties and other platitudes.[22] Still, it should not be forgotten that he was an early defender of Israel. As if anticipating the reemergence of unconcealed anti-Semitism, he predicted that, should a Jewish nation-state come into being, Jews would not escape the accusation that they could not be full members of the French community, and, by having to endure anti-Semitic hostility, they would once again be forced to face themselves, on the one hand, either as complete or less than complete Jews, and, on the other hand, as complete or less than complete Frenchmen. But this neat stroke adds layers to the stereotype. Even in the eyes of many of the best intentioned—the liberal democratic Frenchmen, as he called them—they could not be both. But such a choice was a

false one; one could be both, Sartre seemed to say, articulating the Enlightenment ideal, by appealing to the power of rational choice: "Not one Frenchman will be free so long as the Jews do not enjoy the fullness of their rights. Not one Frenchman will be secure so long as a single Jew—in France or in the world at large—can fear for his life."[23] His answer to the "Jewish Question" was to put his hope in revolution that would erase all differences, a revolution in which the Jew would no longer be a Jew, a revolution that would somehow be synonymous with assimilation or smooth the path towards it, a revolution, finally, that history would achieve, bringing Jews into history from which they had been missing since the Diaspora.[24] His difference with Marx was that Marx believed in the end of history, while he did not. The Jews constituted for him an "abstract historical community," and "if it is true, as Hegel says, that a community is historical to the degree that it remembers its history, then the Jewish community is the least historical of all, for it keeps a memory of nothing but a long martyrdom, that is, of long passivity."[25] He did not say how the members of the dominant culture might communicate with the members of the "inferior" one without imposing their traditions and values, and doubtless, in addition, justifying their superiority in the name or rather under the guise of rationality, and determined by the overarching movement of history. So he failed to untie the Gordian knot: revolution would somehow cut it. Just as, we have seen, Voltaire had no real experience of Jews, neither did Sartre when he wrote *Réflexions sur la question juive;* he was on the whole isolated from the evidence of the changing ethnic nature of French society. It was not within his field of vision to think of a society of diverse groups, willing to share political, economic, and social values without humiliating and shaming others, and accepting an active tolerance of private notions of the good. But, neither was he wary of utopian longings.[26] That this myopia obscured Sartre's vision and imagination is even more striking than Voltaire's, which, as we saw, located an ambiguous place for Jews in history and at the same time placed them ambiguously outside it.

Also in 1944, Horkheimer and Adorno, from their exile in Los Angeles exposed what for them was the darker side of the Enlightenment. Horkheimer, however, did not start out in that direction. In 1933, he celebrated both the Enlightenment and the Revolution:

> "The battle cries of the Enlightenment and of the French Revolution are valid now more than ever. The dialectical critique of the world borne along by them consists precisely in showing that they have retained rather than lost their actuality . . . Politics should not abandon those demands, but realize them . . . not, however, by clinging in utopian fashion to historically conditioned definitions of them, but in accordance with their meaning. The content of these ideas is not eternal but subject to historical change . . . because the human impulses that demand something better take [historically] different forms."[27]

Ten years of historical change set him and Adorno on a revisionist course in which another dialectical turn was registered. They asked why it was that mankind, "instead of entering into a truly human condition," in which "social freedom is inseparable from enlightened thought," rejected enlightenment. They set out to argue that the sources of the great change were to be found "in the Enlightenment itself when paralyzed by fear of the truth," and not so much in the "nationalist, pagan and modern mythologies manufactured precisely in order to contrive such a reversal."[28] Enlightenment rejected anthropomorphism, which was the basic principle of myth, and civilization's advance rested on its repression and the conquest of nature.[29] There is, they declare, a deep resemblance in the Hebrew and Greek myths in that both reveal the dominion over nature by man and Zeus, who oversees the works of man, "both wicked and just, and even the wantonness of the beasts."[30] Logos is at work; and discursive logic takes a leap forward in the act of substitution in the course of sacrifice, as, for example, in the sacrifice of the lamb. Thus, mythology was the starting point in the "unending process of enlightenment in which ever and again, with the inevitability of necessity, every specific theoretic view succumbs to the destructive criticism that it is only a belief—until even the very notions of spirit, of truth and, indeed, enlightenment itself, have become animistic magic." In short, myths realize enlightenment, but enlightenment engenders its own myths, encouraging the master myth that there is nothing new under the sun and that humankind can look forward to nothing but conformity, from which, however, the self—"the unique self [which has] never wholly disappeared"—might find its way out of the vicious circle.[31] This was not quite the same as Voltaire's notion of how myth, a stage in human consciousness common to all cultures, would be compelled to yield to reason and factual evidence, but, as we saw more than once, he was far from maintaining that the self was capable of full knowledge, believing more modestly that the self could expand knowledge little by little and benefit by rejecting unexamined beliefs.

Horkheimer and Adorno not only questioned the Enlightenment's notion of reason's claims and promises to finally emancipate human beings from long centuries of oppressive myth and religion, but also it was in the Enlightenment's enthusiasm for system, calculation, and categorization that they located the sources of the triumph of technical and scientific reason in bourgeois culture—the unintended results of an uncritical belief in science, which was made to bear the burden of racial theories. They unfairly indicted what they conceived as the whole of the Enlightenment's identification of human consciousness with instrumental rationality, *tout court*, forgetting Kant's warning that "Dogmas and formulas, those mechanical instruments for rational use (or rather misuse) of his (the individual's) natural endowments, are the ball and chain of his permanent immaturity."[32] The instrumentalization of reason marked for them the end of the critical spirit and the generation of new myths no more capable of, and indeed less prepared

for, giving human beings the resources to deal with the problem of human unpredictability. Hence, unbeknownst to themselves, Jews who were the principal victims of this failure were drifting dangerously towards the reefs of "self-destruction,"[33] and its new barbarians, exhibiting their anti-Semitic fury, were leading the way to it. They "make themselves the executors of the Old Testament: they want the Jews who have eaten of the tree of knowledge to return unto dust."[34] The allusion to the tree of knowledge may perhaps be seen as a critique, both of the Old Testament's condemnation of the revolt against divine omnipotence, and of the new power and burden that the unreflective heirs of the Enlightenment had wrongly bestowed upon rationality. The only barrier against "competing bureaucracies and powerful rulers," terror, violence, injustice, and intrigue was the "obduracy of thought." It alone could struggle against evil.[35]

Hannah Arendt, who writes of thinking "as relentless and repetitive as life itself . . . [I]ts processes permeate the whole of human existence so intimately that its beginnings and end coincide with the beginning and end of human life itself," shares this belief, and singles out, as its opposite, "thoughtlessness," the very condition, she says, of evil-doing.[36] Adorno, in his critique of Heidegger, later launched a general critique of existentialism as a retreat into inwardness that left unexplored the actual workings of society, and took no account of how "history . . . intrude[s] on every word and withholds each word from the recovery of some alleged original meaning, that meaning which the jargon is always trying to track down."[37] These last words could have been written in praise of Voltaire's attacks against the "shameful" nature of tyranny, but Horkheimer and Adorno, almost as an aside, found fault with his "one-sided" reason that was leading to further misuses of power and ensuring the waning power of thought. Voltaire had not, moreover, understood the positive aspects of power; without its provision of security there could be no place for goodness.[38] It must be said that, in their certainty—no less than in the case of the Marxists of various stripes who also believed in a certain future—they startlingly predicted that anti-Semitism would die out, and downplayed Voltaire's waning trust in reason. In this bold prediction, they ironically manifested some faith in the Enlightenment. They cannot categorically be said to have surrendered to post-modernism *avant la lettre*, even if they were unable to revitalize the message of the Enlightenment by announcing a critically sound and practical program to continue its goals.[39] Unlike Voltaire's critique of false, because unfounded, optimism, which he contrasted with sound arguments that questioned pessimism, they sound strangely optimistic in a Marxist sense, especially its messianic strains, but without, in the opinion of one critic, Marx's superior understanding of how control over nature must be conceived of in the context of social organization:

> The anti-Semites try to realize their negative absolute by their own power, and change the world into the hell which they always thought it was. The change depends on whether the ruled see and control themselves

> in the face of absolute madness and call a halt to it. If thought is liberated from domination and if violence is abolished, the long absent idea is liable to develop that Jews too are human beings. This development would represent the step out of an anti-Semitic society which drives Jews and others to madness, and into the human society. This step would also fulfill the Fascist lie, but in contradicting it, the Jewish question would prove in fact to be the turning point of history. By overcoming that sickness of mind which thrives on the ground of self-assertion untainted by reflective thought, mankind would develop from a set of opposing races to the species which, even as nature, is more than mere nature. Individual and social emancipation from domination is the counter-movement to false projection, and no Jew would then resemble the senseless evil visited upon him as upon all persecuted beings, be they animals or men.[40]

In their expectation that it would be replaced by general hostility against all difference, they may have been closer to the mark.[41] Jürgen Habermas in 1961 was similarly self-deceptive, declaring rather too hastily that, with the disposal of the question of anti-Semitism, "the Jewish heritage drawn from the German spirit had become indispensable for our own life and survival. … we are now forced into the historical irony of taking up the Jewish Question without the Jews."[42]

But Zygmunt Bauman, who received the Adorno Prize that the city of Frankfurt bestowed on him, believes that the veil of deception still shrouds the core of the problem. Taking a few steps further along the path that Horkheimer and Adorno had set out, he argues that the genocide was nourished by a blind belief in rationality and allegiance to the naton-state. In his view, barbarism, rationality, and modernity are not opposed but triply conjoined. Instrumental reason, while not the cause of modern barbarism, is, nevertheless, unable to halt it. The modern "Gardening State," is his metaphor for a state project bringing together planning, social engineering, and reason to destroy dangerous social elements. The Nazis looked on the Jews as weeds choking the garden and saw the mentally ill and homosexuals in the same light. They deserved elimination because they did not, and ought not to, exist in a modern world governed by strict rules of order and discipline. There is no direct line that leads from modernity to the Holocaust, however. That would be a misreading of Bauman's thesis. Modern technology, modern race theories, scientism, and the administrative and bureaucratic reach of the nation-state together formed the crucible in which the poisons were brewed.[43]

## Ernst Cassirer and Leo Strauss debate Judaism

Such a reading, if placed only in the post-Holocaust context, distorts earlier interpretations and retrospectively turns its backs on them. We must once

again go back to an earlier period to regain something of the tone and intent of scholars who were already affirming that it was inaccurate to define the Enlightenment as a totalistic ideology dedicated to unqualified rationality. In his prefatory remarks to his renowned work on the Enlightenment, published in 1932, just one year before the Nazis achieved power, Ernst Cassirer asked his readers not to give up on the Enlightenment's reliance on reason and science as the ultimate proof of unprecedented human achievement. Philosophic reason was the end result of a movement away from Cartesianism's mathematic abstractions via empirical induction and Newtonianism's analytic method applicable to its uses in dealing with the problems of the moral world. But he ended his book by praising Lessing, who had in his *Education of Humanity* argued that religion and history were reconcilable. Lessing, he said, avoided reason's "merely negative critical function." Moreover, it was due to him that the Enlightenment "was able to reconvert criticism to creative activity and shape it and use it as an indispensable instrument of life and of the constant renewal of the spirit."[44] In 1944, 12 years later, as Hitler's armies were showing signs of defeat, he wrote of Judaism's enduring contribution to the questioning of religious myth; its challenge to idolatry in its ancient and modern forms; its elevation of an "ethical religion" based on individual moral responsibility replacing one founded on collective guilt; and, above all, the change of religious thought and feeling from individualism to universalism, which, he said, had all the qualities of a prophetic religion bringing all nations together under the worship of one God. Universalism had not lost its appeal to him. In a heroic but cautiously utopian mood, he looked back to the hope of perpetual peace that Kant crowned at the apex of Enlightenment thought. It seems as if he wished to remind us of Voltaire's call for an end to the myths that enslaved human beings, but he did so in a different spirit. Voltaire, the myth destroyer, created or at least helped perpetuate a mythology of his own. Cassirer's was a spirit that saw beyond the myths that clung to Jewish prophetic religion. They did not fatally obscure its ideals; indeed its universalist ideals, he pressed on, were vital to the spirit of Enlightenment, and indeed the ideals did not require myths to survive:

> No Jew whatsoever can and will ever overcome the terrible ordeal of these last years. . . . What the modern Jew had to defend in this combat was not only his physical existence or the preservation of the Jewish race. Much more was at stake. We had to represent all those ethical ideals that had been brought into being by Judaism and found their way into general human culture, into the life of all civilized nations. And here we stand on firm ground. These ideals are not destroyed and cannot be destroyed. They have stood their ground in these critical days. If Judaism has contributed to break the power of the modern political myths, it has done its duty, having once more fulfilled its historical and religious mission.[45]

But before he reached such a ringing reaffirmation of the high ideals of Judaism, Cassirer forced us to ponder the implications of the movement away from theocentrism, which placed new burdens on human frailty. By juxtaposing images of God and man, he raised to the surface the central points both of Judaism and Enlightenment. He cites from, Exodus 20:4–5, "You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them." For him, a break with mythical thought could only occur if it were deprived of imagery.[46] The same holds true, in Cassirer's view, for the poetical imagination:

> Nobody has ever charged the Bible—the Pentateuch, the Prophetic books, the Psalms—with a lack of imagination. . . . But in Judaism the spirit of religion is not the same as that of poetry. Just as Plato excludes poetry from his ideal state, so the Jewish prophets challenge all forms of mythical or poetical imagination. They are the first to conceive the ideal of a purely ethical imagination. Poetry and myth are anthropomorphic in their very essence. . . . Anthropomorphism leads to idolatry, not to religion.[47]

Judaism, he wrote in *An Essay on Man*, published in the same year, changed the meaning of religion. Purity of the heart displaced the myths of object worship. The old taboos, based on fear, were negative, and had no positive meaning.[48] Just as it rejects images and idols, Judaism, to be true to itself, must expunge poetry lest it elevate man above God, and, as he might have added, God, being Absolute, must remain nameless and must also remain non-imaged. We may conclude that human beings are not created in God's image, even if there are, Spinoza argued, for example, anthropomorphic elements in the Old Testament, simply because the prophets, unlike Moses, could not conceive of an incorporeal God. Their corporeal images of God dramatized the struggle between God and his people; indeed, without images and poetic language, the religious imagination would not take fire. An anthropomorphic God is an idol and as such denies Judaic monotheism, as Spinoza believed (*TTP*, Ch. 2, p. 83), and, as Voltaire, for his own reasons, also argued.

Two additional reflections seem in order. The first is that the image in Judaism demobilizes freedom, and that freedom is an essential feature of Jewish ethics. The ethical and poetical imaginations were not incompatible for Cassirer, but the first was to be understood in a moral sense, while the second opened the way to self-criticism and self-knowledge. In his thoughts on the fallout from the monstrous myths of the Hitlerian regime, he seemed to be saying that, at a minimum, moral claims had to take priority over the aesthetic without banishing it. His overriding concern, however, was to make Judaism's ethical ideals compatible with those of the Enlightenment.

To do so, he drew a sharp parallel between prophetic Judaism's ethical universalist ideal, which "is not confined within the limits of a single nation," and the Enlightenment's universalism.[49] His faith in the legacy of the Enlightenment did not waver. His death in 1945 deprived us unfortunately of any further ideas he might have added to the question.

Voltaire, we ought to remember, documented the presence of idolatrous practices in ancient primitive religions, including those of the ancient Hebrews, and used his considerable literary powers, as we have already seen, to stress the poetic imagery in the Bible:

> The Jewish religion that preceded ours, and which was granted by God himself, was totally filled with images by which God is represented. He deigns to speak a human language in a burning bush; he appears on a mountain. The celestial spirits that he sends forth all arrive in human form; finally the sanctuary is filled with cherubim, who have human bodies with wings and animal heads. . . . In spite of God's prohibition against painting or sculpting any form, he has thus deigned to adjust himself to human weakness, which demands that its senses be addressed through the use of images. . . . Isaiah in chapter VI sees the Lord seated on a throne, and the skirts of his robe filling the Temple. The Lord extends his hand and touches Jeremiah's mouth in chapter I of this prophet's book. In chapter III Ezekiel sees a throne of sapphires, and God appears to him as a man seated on this throne. These images do not distort the purity of the Jewish religion that has never made use of tableaux, statues, and idols to represent God in the eyes of the people.
>
> (*OC*, 36, 219–20)[50]

The irony is unmistakable, the scorn withering, the inference clear. The Jewish God is anthropomorphic. Other features of the Old Testament, primarily the myths that enveloped Jewish teachings, he found just as, if not more, objectionable. He saw them as an integral part of Judaism and, indeed, of all religions, and that it was more important to shatter the made up stories of the past than to break images. He did not see the image taboo as containing within itself the seeds of ethical religion as Cassirer did. He could not visualize a religion, except deism, without idol worship and the appeal to verbal images, even as he had some difficulty in working out the relationship between the literal and the figurative expressions in the Bible, exposing the first as certain proof of mythology at work, and lightly praising the second as a gift of the poetical imagination. He had a problem when he separated the poetry and the images in the Bible from its theology. For Cassirer, by contrast, ethical Judaism must subordinate them.

Did Voltaire open up any space for religion—a question that we have put off answering until this moment when it seems more fitting to ask it in the light of twentieth century reflections on how the paganized politics of Nazism created new idols. He distinguished between religion's transitory

manifestations and "a true religion [which] ought to be timeless and valid everywhere. It should be like the rays of the sun that sheds its light on all peoples and all generations. [une vraie religion, [qui] doit être pour tous les temps et pour tous les lieux, elle doit être comme la lumière du soleil, qui éclaire tous les peuples et toutes les générations]." He envisaged a religion of humanism, liberated from doctrine and dogma that in reality amounted to nothing more than a collection of myths manipulated by organized churches and states as an instrument of maintaining order. He doubted, though, that such a religion could ever be achieved except possibly for the well informed. It was not because of their greater rationality that people everywhere believed in a single divinity, and then moved on, he said, to the adoration of several gods—from monotheism to polytheism—before reason told them otherwise. It was their overheated imaginations that were the cause of their chimeras. If they had been philosophers "they would have adored the God of all of nature [le dieu de toute la nature]." They were, as weak human beings, instead carried away by their feelings; they did not inquire critically ("Religion," *OC*, 36, 469–89, esp. 469–75). It is in the action of the human mind, in the very nature of human beings, and whether or not they imagined and believed in false gods or a single one, that we must seek for an explanation of the universal need for religion. As we saw, he found support for this view in his wide reading of the available anthropologic studies of European and non-European cultures. Thus, the mind must be the starting point for any useful investigation into the nature of religion's appeal. It was on this reasoning that he made his plea for a natural religion.

Cassirer was rightly critical of Voltaire's lack of attention to some of religion's more troubling questions. If man comes into his own, what does his elevation do to God? Anthropomorphism is, in the eyes of Cassirer's student, Leo Strauss, an exit from theocentrism.[51] Teacher and student agreed, but Strauss regrets the change, while Cassirer remains, in Strauss' opinion, stuck with the problem of how myth might be overcome and suggests that, for his teacher, "the mind reads the world of myth as its own product, that the mind recognizes itself in the world of myth—and thereby this world loses its 'compulsory' character for human beings."[52] For Strauss, who wishes to establish a lineage from Spinoza to more recent times, assimilation raised its subversive head by the example Spinoza made of his life and irresponsibly proposed a solution to the Jewish question that ultimately found its fullest expression in the mass murders of the twentieth century. Taking the starkest view possible, Strauss declared that assimilation was built on a foundation of anthropocentric thought that gave rise to science and technology and naïve notions of progress. Those Jews who sought refuge from, or turned their backs on, Judaism, willfully and misguidedly, did not diminish, but rather increased Jewish vulnerability, and, in the end, delivered Jews to the horrors of large-scale death by advanced technologic means, never before seen in history. Assimilation had not produced a solution to the Jewish question. It left it in shambles. Look carefully, he urged, at what has been achieved in an

ongoing crisis in Western civilization, undermined by the lures of modernity, and at what has been lost.[53] Without quite saying so, Leo Strauss casts the Enlightenment into the shadows. He hedges his bets, with the pronouncement that, "No one can be both a philosopher and a theologian, nor, for that matter, some possibility which transcends the conflict between philosophy and theology, or pretends to be a synthesis of both. But every one of us can be and ought to be either one or the other, the philosopher open to the challenge of theology or the theologian open to the challenge of philosophy."[54] Strauss disputes Spinoza's denial that God is incomprehensible and asserts that philosophers posit their confidence in achieving knowledge "on an unevident premise," and base their arguments against revelation on a presupposed unbelief in revelation.[55] He put it rather ambiguously but not without some relish in another comment on the Enlightenment:

> Thus the Enlightenment's mockery of the teachings of the [religious] tradition is not the successor of a prior refutation of these teachings; it does not bring to expression the amazement of unprejudiced men at the power of manifestly absurd prejudices; but it *is* the refutation. . . . Thus the importance of mockery for the Enlightenment's critique of religion is an indirect proof of the irrefutability of orthodoxy.[56]

Political Zionism was not Strauss' solution to the Jewish Question, for although its aim, as he put it, was the "cleansing of the Jews from millennial degradation, or with the recovery of Jewish dignity, honor, or pride," it addressed only "the community of descent, of the blood," and in this respect it would remain "an empty shell without a Jewish culture which has its roots in the Jewish heritage."[57] Cultural Zionism can only understand itself if it "turns into religious Zionism," which is "in the first place Jewish faith and only secondarily Zionism," and "must regard as blasphemous the notion of a human solution to the Jewish problem."[58] Strauss held fast to the conviction that revelation was central to Judaism. As well, modern idolators, because they admitted "the possibility of divine action," were even better than atheists.[59] Then, too, because certainty eludes human beings, Jews, like everyone else, must live in a state of uncertainty and contingency. Such a conclusion cannot be palatable to the religious Zionists who look to the Bible as its exclusive interpreters and in some cases impose, in the words of Uriel Simon, "the values of a maximalist—at times—brutal—religious Zionism on what seems like the plain meaning of the Biblical texts."[60] If not perfectly in harmony with Strauss' views, Simon surely would support him in not treating the Bible as just another book, but he does not shut out those many Jews "who may respect the Bible, love it, obey it; but may equally well disobey it, rebel against it, or feel estranged from it."[61]

Cassirer saw Enlightenment's project in much the same way as Voltaire, but with a difference. Voltaire's denigration of the fables human beings take

their inspiration from may be likened to Cassirer's view that the mind creates myth and is capable of reducing or eliminating it. At the same time, it is difficult to remove God from the picture completely. If, as in Genesis, man is made in God's image, (Genesis 1:27) then, as Jack Miles suggests, he has a share in the mind of God, but only if it is recognized, as it may indeed be read, that the godlikeness of God—his monoanthropism—can be shared with human beings without derogating from it.[62] In finding the poetic imagination antithetical to the inner force of Judaism, Cassirer points out that the making of images is precisely the poet's aim, to have the poet take, so to speak, the place of the Creator. On such an interpretation, God speaks directly and unequivocally without mediation. As well, we may regard Cassirer's attempt, late in his life, to find the ideals of prophetic Judaism, which replaced mythical thought with ethical thought, a home in the Enlightenment as not unambiguously successful. It was an uneasy home, as it is difficult to conceive of religion, indeed, life itself, without calling on the power of myth, images, and the poetic imagination to convey some of its meaning, however distorting they might be to notions of divinity.

"Again and again the prophets come back," Cassirer writes, "to this fundamental difference. Their deepest feelings and their whole religious pathos are concentrated upon and focused on this point. The nature of God is far beyond all natural and human beings; it admits of no image, no simile or likeness." Judaism is committed, and human beings must learn and yearn to live up to an austere and severe idealism, he says, quoting from Isaiah:

> To whom then will you liken God? or what likeness compare with him? / An idol?–A workman casts it, / and a goldsmith overlays it / with gold, / and casts for it silver chains. / As a gift one chooses mulberry wood / -wood that will not rot- / then seeks out a skilled artisan / to set up an image that will / not topple.

And, again from Isaiah, "The grass withers, the flower fades / but the word of our God will stand forever" (Isaiah, 40:18–20 and Isaiah, 40, 6–8).[63]

These biblical citations, so poetically resplendent, do not unequivocally support Cassirer's anti-imagism. Indeed, ethical religion, which is derived from its prophetic messages, and which Cassirer writes, carries "the hope and the assurance of a 'new heaven and a new earth,' even when it speaks of 'the end of all days,' " calls on images to proclaim God's word.[64]

Even as Voltaire said that:

> the most perfect of the earth's beings bore a faint resemblance of the form of their Creator, and [that] . . . this idea should bind man never to allow himself to fall into a state of moral degeneration [le plus parfait des êtres de la terre était une faible ressemblance de la forme de son créateur, et . . . cette idée devait engager l'homme à ne jamais dégénérer], (*OCM*, 11, 139)

he was less demanding. He was not willing, nor did he think it possible, to banish all images from theologic and philosophic discourse

Jews were, from the time of their dispersal, thought by the Christian world to deserve their rootlessness but were resented, feared, and often hated for it. Their self-ascribed chosenness, deemed to be their distinguishing character, made them the Ur-cosmopolites of the world. By defining their essence in their rootless condition that appeared to bestow upon them a special place in God's universe, while adding to the causes of their persecution, Voltaire sought to eliminate both by substituting in their place the idea of universalism, embracing all human beings that would bring an end to their self-chosen alienation and consequent rootlessness, which set them as a nation apart from others. He was seduced by universalism's lofty ideals, but he was not attuned to the attachments of Jews to their culture and religion, except as a crushing burden and as a gratuitous affront to enlightened persons. In this reductive construction, no conflict was perceived, and the likelihood of tensions was thrust aside. It is in this respect that Voltaire failed the Enlightenment—not seeing that his universalism did not give sufficient weight to particular attachments. While the religious manifestations of Jewish particularism were showing signs of wearing thin and occluded almost everything else that did not conform to them, Jewish emancipation advanced, but it dragged behind it the obligations of biblical Judaism, felt strongly by some Jews and much less by others who tried to live as secular Jews. These presented difficulties, which are all too familiar, and were unquestionably experienced more acutely by individuals than by communities.

## Judaism and Jewishness: essence and history

It seems reasonable to question the concept, or more accurately, the notion of Judaism as essence, and to speak instead of the subjective nature of "Jewishness," and to see it, in its various manifestations, as shaping an evolving Judaism, even as Judaism itself appears to serve as a wellspring that waters Jewish creative energies, loyalties, and values. But a normative Judaism, we may safely say, no longer exists, if it ever did historically, even if it was mentally constructed. Jean-Christophe Attias and Esther Benbassa seize its meanings admirably in asserting that Judaism "is the product of its own history and of the particular contacts it has had through the ages," that exchanges between it and the dominant religions have been constant, and that those who identify it with "closure, with an unchanging world turned in on itself, are clearly on the wrong track."[65] Such is indeed the case in modern times, and it is hard to fathom how Jews in the long history of the Diaspora did not experience similar struggles of definition as they encountered different conditions and adjusted their lives to them in different and distant parts of Asia Minor, further East, North Africa, and Europe, where they developed various ways to interpret their obligations as Jews, and their

obligations as subjects of the states where they lived under laws the severity of which varied in their harshness or leniency. Such evidence as we have testifies to the elasticity of observance. In support of such a view, we may briefly allude to the Golden Age of Hebrew poetry in Iberia. Modern notions of mutually hostile worlds and conceptions of self, Peter Cole writes convincingly, should not be projected into the past. The culture of Spanish *convivencia*, or co-existence, made it possible during the Middle Ages to experience through culture and the marketplace a vibrant interaction, "based on a deep-seated ethnic hierarchy involving protected and second-class citizens," who were Christian and Jewish.[66] In the Sephardic community in Amsterdam, to offer another example, Jews mingled with non-Jews, deviated from Judaism's behavioral norms, and had to be brought back to them by various strategies, including threats and the actual pronouncements of excommunication. Jews, then as today, did not stop thinking of themselves as Jews because they were sometimes lax in their observance. Jewishness was not entirely explained by birth or ethnic identity alone, but rather by varieties of religious or cultural experience with an evolving, not a fixed, concept of Judaism.

What constitutes the newest advances into Jewishness, as distinct from Judaism, evolved in the wake of the Enlightenment and beyond, and, unlike Judaism in its religious manifestations, took no definitive form. A hardly satisfactory, because limited, way to identify it, as some would have it, is to think of it as something irreducible, recognized as such by Jews and anti-Semites alike. Hannah Arendt describes one of its meanings "for the individual Jew [as] at once a physical stain and a mysterious personal privilege, both inherent in a racial predestination,"[67] taking exception to Marcel Proust's identification of obsessive Jewishness with supposed genetic markers. Racial predestination smacked of essentialism and, hence, was a trap, Arendt believed, and one which she was not about to fall into. Few have better analyzed the social ambitions of emancipated Jews in France in and beyond the nineteenth century; and that moment in her analysis of modern anti-Semitism and notions of Jewishness seems a good place to begin a discussion of how she dealt with both. Her perception of the psychologic strains felt by Jewish elites as they entered the non-Jewish world in the first flush of the Jewish Enlightenment—a world in which they were made to feel their marginality and ambiguity, just as they tried by desperate maneuvers to conceal both—was captured first in her 1933 biography of Rahel Varnhagen, the Jewish-born *salonnière*, who became a convert, but increasingly an uneasy one in her last years. Her study of Varnhagen was an important marker in her attempt to find her own way as a Jewish German intellectual in a male-dominated university system.[68] What seemed clear in the biography and in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was that emancipation took an unexpected twist, turning educated and secularized Jews away from a past in which Jewish elites had exercised whatever privileges they were granted, including a restricted exercise in the responsibilities of leadership over the

Jewish communities. They were to be liberated from that past, but as assimilated Jews their private lives paradoxically centered on their own feelings of Jewishness as they entered mainstream society and responded to it apologetically but also arrogantly, as their need to belong could never be satisfied in a society that could not decide on the acceptability and non-acceptability of Jewish difference. Thus, assimilation came to possess a larger unintended meaning. Modern anti-Semitism no longer had to feed on Christian hatred of Jews as the chosen people, just as Jewishness no longer had to seek its vitality in Judaism as theology. Henceforth, Jewishness "could be considered only in the categories of virtue or vice,"[69] seen as vice by anti-Semites who transformed it into a crime worthy of extirpation; and, alternatively, as virtue by Jews who would regard it as innate. Marcel Proust was, for her, the quintessentially assimilated and tormented Jew. He himself, others like him, and his fictional characters were accepted in the French aristocratic salons at the time of the Dreyfus Affair precisely because they were different, setting the scene for the ultimate discovery of the truth of Jewishness in a complex series of ceremonial games designed, on the Jewish side, to conceal, and, on the non-Jewish side, to expose what it was thought to be.

Not so clear, however, is whether the question of exposure or concealment reveals any startling truths about Jewishness, or whether proof can be offered, if it exists in any historic instance, of truth with a capital "T". We appear to be left holding a bag of puzzles, perhaps tricks, the biggest one of all refusing to give up on the mystery of Jewishness. Thus, we are forced back to its necessary historicization and to its emergence as a historic fact, revealing its different faces. A reasonable historic marker is the turmoil created by the Dreyfus Affair. It is taken up at this point in our narrative and argument as a follow-up to the period that in the earlier part of the century witnessed the debates within French Jewish circles presented by the challenges that Judaism faced by the demands of modernization and nationalism. In Proust's lifetime, Jews were seen as traitors at the time of the Affair, but once Dreyfus was shown to be innocent and stupid to boot, Arendt goes on to affirm, social interest in the Jews virtually ended and so did, for the time being, political anti-Semitism. Both were removed from center stage, only to return to it once Jewish "vice and criminality"—the twin Jewish evils that the French elites insisted on—were conflated in post-World War Europe, especially when the specter of Bolshevism was identified with both. As important in her mind was the unexpected dual development of democratic equality, suggested by Alexis de Tocqueville's idea that differences of conditions would not survive the demands to create conditions of equality. This prompted the insight that, just as differences and the protections they offered were increasingly being erased, such differences as Jews continued to express were highlighted and regarded with suspicion and, hence, in an atmosphere of intolerance, making them, not less, but more, vulnerable to anti-Semitic threats and attacks. It was when they lost their

public functions and influence, and were simply left with their wealth that anti-Semitism assumed a new and murderous life.[70]

Arendt pushes her rejection of the notion of a Jewish essence further. She chooses to question it within the context of the emphasis on human rights and humanity, and warns against the uncritical acceptance of a notion of abstract humanity. If such an abstraction is the premise upon which a concept of what it is to be human is what we must fall back on, we will find ourselves in a downward movement to bare animality, ending in a denial of the need of particular human groups for the protective covering that saves them against barbarism. She argues for the notion of becoming, rather than of being. She denies that human dignity derives from something innate in human beings. Unprotected being invites denial of the individual and leads to obliteration. Becoming gives groups of human beings a stance in the world. Human dignity is founded on sharing a condition, of being part of a larger community, indeed, of being part of a political community. Once any particular community within a larger community is excluded from it, and has nothing to fall back on except its human rights, bound together with nothing but its humanity, it will perish:

> The conception of human rights, based upon the assumed existence of a human being as such, broke down at the very moment when those who professed to believe in it were for the first time confronted with people who had indeed lost all other qualities and specific relationships—except that they were still human. The world found nothing sacred in the abstract nakedness of being human. The survivors … could see … that the abstract nakedness of being nothing but human was their greatest danger. Because of it they were regarded as savages and, afraid that they might end by being considered beasts, they insisted on their nationality, the last sign of their former citizenship, as their only remaining and recognized tie with humanity. Their distrust of natural, their preference for national, rights comes precisely from their realization that natural rights are granted even to savages.[71]

Humanity depends on the concreteness of civic and political life, the only sure guarantee against savagery. That is the life in which human beings can communicate with each other. The private sphere remains, of course, valuable, just as the affects within a particular community render it a community, but it is in reaching beyond it that human beings may struggle to achieve commonalty of purpose. Being human meant for Arendt the life of the *polis*, while she worried deeply that the possibilities of public life were becoming more tenuous and problematic. Throughout her life, she invested her political philosophy with a keen understanding of history. She never had a fallback position that would, when the going got tough, pull her towards the notion of a human essence, let alone a Jewish one. In the year before the Second World War began, she set aside as dangerous Martin Buber's

explanation of Jewish "substance" by way of pseudophilosophic profundity. "Fixating foreigness in something substantial gives rise to a mad urge to define Jewry, Jew, Jewish, and so forth. The answers are both varied and contradictory, and it would be quite foolish to discuss them in detail, as all of them take their cue from whatever the "zeitgeist" may prompt their authors to say, each may be *passé* tomorrow."[72]

Pierre Vidal-Naquet, always scrupulous about the historian's obligation to distinguish mere remembering from history, saw that, unless that rule were followed, essentialism, which for him belonged to the theologic realm according to which every crucial instance of the Jewish past is conflated with the next, would obscure the Jewish past. As such, it is the highest form of myth making, "an infantile illness, but an infantile illness which is suicidal."[73]

Berel Lang suggests a way out of the historic and existential dilemma (the Jew as his own creation by whatever reasoning he employs). The antinomies need not, he says, be compromised. Neither one can displace the other. They are both necessary. Here, a partial appeal is made to Kant's distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal, but Lang argues that the problem of establishing a firm foundation for understanding the fact that Jewishness is a practical not a general problem, and cannot be resolved by accepting Kant's belief that the distinction can be preserved. Once, instead, the ineradicable ties between the historic and the subjective are seen as a practical foundation for action, the individual Jew will be able to determine where he stands, and, it is implied, will be more, but not wholly comfortable, about his decision. The world changes and there are neither short-term nor long-term solutions: "The Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment arguments against difference, against the practice or identity of cults, remain at best high-level abstractions, at worst, tendentious versions of particularism in the guise of universalism."[74]

Such a foundation for thinking about Jewishness in the modern world has hardly gone unnoticed, though the range of individual Jewish perceptions varies greatly and often risks remaining in a frozen state. The belief in a Jewish essence is a good illustration of Sigmund Freud's disregard of history. Indeed, his lack of historic sense permits him to foster the myth of timelessness. He witnessed his Jewishness in two ways. He argued in the critical tradition of the Enlightenment that religion was a burden from which science was rescuing humankind. To be sure, "before the problems of religion it halts for a while, [it] then wavers, . . . [but] there is no stopping. The more the fruits of knowledge become accessible to men, the more widespread is the decline of religious belief." Almost immediately Freud added that, once the uneducated masses—uneducated, because, while they accept the results of scientific thought, they fail to internalize its principles—gave up their belief in God, they would kill without hesitation, because the fear of divine punishment would cease as a threat. The masses were dangerous: they remained children, as he implied in the analogy he drew between childhood neuroses and religious belief.[75] But the non-believing

killers were Nazis, and the believers, in vast numbers, made their own accommodations with them. In 1932, before the Nazis came to power, Freud described the ancestral home of the Jews, Palestine, in a letter to Arnold Zweig, as a "tragically mad land" that "has never produced anything but religions, sacred frenzies, presumptuous attempts to overcome the world of appearance by the inner world of wishful thinking."[76] Elsewhere, however, he also wrote:

> No reader of [the Hebrew version] of this book (*Totem and Taboo*) will find it easy to put himself in the emotional position of an author who is ignorant of the language of holy writ, who is completely estranged from the religion of his fathers—as well as from every other religion—and who cannot take a share in nationalist ideals, but who has never repudiated his people, who feels that he is in his essential nature a Jew and who has no desire to alter that nature. If the question were put to him, 'Since you have abandoned all these common characteristics of your countrymen, what is here left to you that is Jewish?' he would reply: 'A very great deal, and probably its very essence.'[77]

The appeal to timelessness is rejected by Gershom Scholem who soberly disagreed with:

> those (and there are indeed many of them) who view the events of Jewish history from a fixed dogmatic standpoint and who know exactly whether some phenomenon or another is 'Jewish' or not. Nor am I a follower of that school which proceeds on the assumption that there is a well-defined and unvarying 'essence' of Judaism, especially not where the evaluation of historical events is concerned.[78]

Neither the historicization of the relationship between Jews and non-Jews, nor the modern separation of subjective Jewishness from Judaism, provides a full explanation of Jewish survival and its deadly companion, anti-Semitism, which survives alongside it. More and more, Jewishness came to be centered on individual Jewish responses. Again Arendt, some 50 years ago, came close to depicting how Jews would adjust their life's hopes by crafting new self-images to understand themselves and in return to see themselves mirrored in the images of non-Jews. With the twentieth century challenge to Judaism as religion, with what she called, "the laicization of the Jews," which altered the notion of the chosen people, an illusion was created, "shared both by non-believing Jews and by non-Jews, according to which the Jewish people were naturally more intelligent, better, more healthy, and better equipped to survive: the motor of history and the salt of the earth."[79]

Isaiah Berlin, in his parable of strangers who possess the power to explain to the tribe in which they find themselves everything that can be known about its features in ways unimagined by, and superior to, the tribe's own

capacities to know itself, concludes that this very power induces suspicion and heightens the sense of apartness and difference:

> [T]he difference—and the strangers' anxiety to deny it merely attracts further attention to their un-native conduct: for the natives would never dedicate themselves to refuting something alleged to be so patently false with so much fervor and such a wealth of apparently unanswerable yet, in the end, unconvincing argument. The more desperately the strangers argue, the more vividly their differences from the natives stand out; indeed the anxiety to deny the difference is itself a barrier to disappearance. … the strangers we speak of are unique in retaining their peculiar attributes, especially their religious views, while stoutly denying that these peculiarities are of crucial importance, or relevant to their relationship to the society in which they dwell. This attitude rests on an illusion which is nevertheless, for the most part sincerely and honorably, accepted as a reality by both sides, but which, being half felt as delusive, communicates a sense of desperate embarrassment to those who seek to examine it: as if a mystery were being approached to the belief in the non-existence of which both sides are pledged, yet the reality of which both at least suspect.[80]

It is this difference that Hannah Arendt distinguished as a kind of apotheosis of thought which the stranger, Rahel Varnhagen, cultivated as she turned away from her own tribe to enter into the new one. Varnhagen's renunciation was meant to be absolute, but she found that it came back to haunt her. For while she could say, "How loathsome it is always to establish one's identity first" and "That alone is enough to make it so repulsive to be a Jew," she told a friend not to be ashamed of being part of "the nation whose misfortunes and defects you know all the better because of it; you must not abandon them for fear of people's saying that you still have some Jewishness about you!"[81] Similarly, the strangers Berlin is describing have not abandoned their religious views. Nevertheless, the psychologic and social consequences of making thought at once a gift and a weapon, as both Berlin and Arendt tell us, are the same. The God-given gift, emblematic of their chosenness, is a threat and an affront to the non-chosen.

Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson make the question of difference a key element of their examination of what they call the paths to, of, and from emancipation. They are concerned to ensure that studies of emancipation pay due attention to the differences of Jewish experiences in the various cultures in which actors on both sides of the divide played uneasy and ambiguous roles. Thus, they are partisans of an:

> anti-evolutionist treatment of large-scale processes, especially state building (but also economic development, international migrations, urbanization, and associational life in civil society) generated in the

> past two decades by sociologists and political scientists working in a comparative and historical macroanalytical vein, as well as by social science scholarship on cognition and choice and by attempts from within liberal political theory to make a place for difference and incommensurable ways of life.[82]

At the same time, they want to avoid an uncritical approach that would fragment the experience of emancipation, which, they say, remains a coherent subject, and survives the effort to challenge such dichotomies as tradition and modernity, of the period before and after emancipation.[83]

Differences and incommensurable ways of life, of course, cannot be separated from questions of cognition and choice. But I have been less concerned with a widened cross-cultural perspective. In my focus on one of the key figures of the Enlightenment, I have dealt with, on the one hand, differences, and yet paradoxically, on the other hand, with resemblances, as I have demonstrated in Voltaire's final conviction that any idea of Jewish emancipation could only be a fantasy, an exception to the destiny of other peoples who would, under guidance, begin the journey to enlightenment. The hard realities of a complex, often misinterpreted, Jewish past had no place in his concept of Judaism.

There are, it is clear, competing, sometimes overlapping, and, at other times, opposing, often bewilderingly, subtle distinctions in the meanings given to Judaism and Jewishness. Indeed, it is hard to find a common thread that holds them together, except the common thread of difference. It is as if the concept of particularism is itself a bundle or an edifice composed of particularisms, of heterogeneous elements with arrows pointing in many directions, suggesting links and affinities binding them, yet none of them, when taken together, constituting a finished building, but rather a structure in process, or perhaps a structure that will never be completed. We have seen examples of how non-believing Jews took on the burdens and privileges of the modern liberated Jewish self. We have evidence that Judaism and Jewishness are not regarded as mutually impermeable mental and social structures, except for the great divide between rabbinic Judaism and Judaism in its various secular forms.

Inwardness sought in study of the Talmud and good deeds is the core around which Hilary Putnam and George Steiner seek to express their loyalties. The traditions of interpretation and reinterpretation about which Putnam speaks are for him enduring, not stultifying, but creative.[84] For Steiner, Judaism is preserved because it is didactic, not in a narrow sense of commanding obedience, but in the sense of questioning, not in the Socratic examined-self sense, but in an extended dialogue of far greater range from "the ultra-orthodox, and fundamentalist to the heretical and the antinomian," and one that includes the individual, private conscience.[85] It is its universality and its non-territorialism that distinguishes it and endows it with moral power.[86] Josef Yerushalmi writes that the "psychological Jew"

rebels against society's attempt to define him and feels that he has transcended the "ancestral choices [he] may no longer understand," floating in "their undefined yet real Jewishness."[87] Zygmunt Bauman speaks more cautiously about how the assimilating Jew has to be aware that by exiting from Judaism he can never be guaranteed full entry into mainstream society, because, just as in a casino where rules keep changing, so, in the apparently welcoming society, rules can change unexpectedly, revealing the possibility that assimilation can be a trap.[88]

Philip Roth has one of his protagonists meditating on humankind's need for "imagined worlds … where we may finally be 'ourselves.' Yet another of our mythological pursuits." The pastoral world before Cain and Abel is ended, to be sure, yet "of all people that belligerent, unillusioned little band of Jews still dream of returning to it. Well that's over. The pastoral stops here and it stops with circumcision." It may be the very mark of irrationality, but what chance does rationality have in the face of a tribal taboo? [M]aybe that's [the physical shock of it] what the Jews had in mind and what makes the act seem quintessentially Jewish and the mark of their reality.

> Circumcision is everything that the pastoral is not and, to my mind, reinforces what the world is about, which isn't strifeless unity. … Quite convincingly, circumcision gives the lie to the womb-dream of life in the beautiful state of ancient prehistory. … The heavy hand of human values falls upon you right at the start, marking our genitals as its own. Inasmuch as one invents one's meanings, along with impersonating one's selves, this is the meaning I propose for that rite. I'm not one of those Jews who want to hook themselves up to the patriarchs or even to the modern state; the relationship of my Jewish 'I' to their 'we' is nothing so direct and unrestrained.

Roth's protagonist proclaims himself to be "A Jew without Jews, without Judaism, without Jewishness, without a temple or an army or even a pistol, a Jew clearly without a home, just the object itself, like a glass or an apple."[89]

The indelibility of circumcision recalls Spinoza's making the imprinting on the flesh as a promise of perpetual Jewish existence. (*TTP*, p. 100). Roth's counter-factual novel, *The Plot Against America*, confirms what appears to be a deep belief in Jewish distinctiveness, and he treats us to a defiant and comic, but angry, attack on those few Jews who choose, in the imagined fascist presidency of Lindbergh's America, to support the unthinkable—an America taking Hitler's side, staying out of the war in Europe and Asia, and, most outrageously of all, to acquiesce in the framing and implementation of anti-Semitic laws, in the course of which Jews are put on the defensive and their lives endangered as they seek to survive by looking for refuge in Canada from a land that they had once thought would shelter

them from the Old World's deeply rooted anti-Semitism. Describing the beleaguered Jewish community in Newark, he writes:

> What they were was what they couldn't get rid of—what they couldn't even begin to want to get rid of. Their being Jews issued from their being themselves, as did their being American. It was as it was, in the nature of things, as fundamental as having arteries and veins, and they never manifested the slightest desire to change it or deny it, regardless of the consequences.[90]

Roth is addressing anew a question that had apparently been laid to rest—the dread of permanent alienation, of outer and inner exile, states of mind that had for a brief period and in privileged places opened up the possibility of entering the social mainstream without loss.

The fear of permanent alienation also lies at the heart of another counter-factual novel. Michael Chabon's, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, depicts Jews in a totally novel setting.[91] Suffering defeat in the 1948 War for Israel, they are granted a 50-year temporary refuge in Alaska's Federal District of Sitka, where Yiddish is spoken as it was in Europe before the Nazis took over and from which they escaped in time. As their stay in Sitka draws to a close, they are faced with the prospect of finding a new asylum. The initiative is taken by strong-armed ultra-orthodox Jews, the Verbover, a fictional Chassidic sect. Collaborating with a neo-conservative US Government, they concoct an exit strategy that pivots on proclaiming as the Messiah, Mendel Shpilman, the son of the Verbover rabbi, after carrying out the demolition of the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem to make way for the reconstruction of the Second Temple. Shpilman was believed to be the Tzadik Ha-Dor, the man of righteousness, who is thought to be born in each generation, and it is his murder that sets the story in motion. The man, who solves the crime is Detective Meyer Landsman, who also solves the chess puzzle left by the murdered man. There are no good moves, he discovers as he contemplates the options: "They call that Zugzwang," Landsman says. " 'Forced to Move.' It means Black would be better off if could just pass." "But you aren't allowed to pass, are you? You have to do something else, don't you?" "Yes. You do," Landsman says. "Even when you know it's only going to lead to you getting checkmated."[92]

The Verbover have decamped to Israel to an uncertain future. It is not Landsman's. No Messiah. Just as in the past, there were none, only false ones, and in the case of Shpilman, a man who refused the role. Landsman and his wife with whom he has been reconciled are looking at an uncertain future, one that replicates past futures:

> There is no Messiah of Sitka. Landsman has no home, no future, no fate but Bina. The land that he and she were promised was bounded only by the fringes of their wedding canopy, by the dog-eared corners

> of membership in an international fraternity whose members carry their patrimony in a tote bag, their world on the tip of the tongue.[93]

No such doubts assail Yuri Slezkine, who has his own twist on how Jews embraced the future. He describes a species of assimilation in the last part of the nineteenth century, in Czarist Russia, which led to what he describes as the Jewish Century.[94] Though by far the longest and densest part of his study is devoted to the Jewish experience in pre- and post-revolutionary Russia, it makes very large claims about Jews everywhere else. His argument rests heavily on, and belongs to, an essentialist notion of Jewishness that cuts across all categories of Jews, and, cavalierly ignores their differences. He reduces their singularity to acumen in business, commerce, and the liberal professions. To them he attaches the label "Mercurians," as opposed to "Apollonians," living in settled agrarian societies. The twentieth century proved to be, despite horrendous Jewish losses in Europe—Slezkine does not ignore the Holocaust, but he does tend to bury it under Jewish success—a period of great advance, a time during which what were once seen as Jewish defects were now appropriated as the model of a modern economy, productive of values that were embraced by non-Jews as symbols of modernity and progress. Jewish precepts seemingly overrode all others, so to speak. We have already seen how assimilation was the vehicle for unprecedented Jewish achievements, not only in the economies of separate national states, but in science, medicine, the arts, and philosophy. Now, Slezkine tells us that these advances were a vital source of the modern world, echoing Marx's conviction that Jews would lead the world to modernization.

As Jews found their way out of the ghetto, forsaking religion and language—the more quickly and, without looking back—to prove to each other and to non-Jews their worth as independent citizens—they attached themselves to the cultivation of these secular pursuits and excelled in them, and did so out of proportion to their numbers. As emancipated and assimilated Jews, as the most faithful disciples of "Reason and Enlightenment," indeed, as "the most vocal and loyal champions," they threw themselves into the task of realizing these ideals and served the states where they lived.[95] Leaning heavily on, but not always acknowledging Hannah Arendt's analysis of nationalism, the book relates, generation by generation, how Jews became integrated and acculturated and identified themselves uneasily with ethnic nationalist ideologies. But the Faustian bargain was not kept. Nationalism worked against them in the end. Jews found the passage to "Frenchness," "Germanness," or whatever, a tortured one, creating a psychology of ambiguity and a culture of uncertainty. (Hannah Arendt, for example, struggled, with the problem of her identity as a Jewish German or a German Jew before and after she went into exile.) In states, such as Czarist Russia, where the barriers were still high but not impermeable, the urbanized and emancipated Jews rebelled against their traditions, including their fathers' participation in semi-feudal trades and commerce. Most of all,

they rebelled against the state. Those who turned to socialism proudly carried aloft the banners of internationalism and universalism. The enormous spurt of Jewish advancement was, however, achieved at great cost, whether in the nationalist liberal or Soviet regimes where they had become part of the social, economic, and intellectual fabric. It was ruthlessly torn apart in 1939. It took a little longer in the Soviets, but as early as the end of the war. Before the débâcle, Slezkine argues, the continuum of Jewish emancipation left an indelible mark on the world. It could not have been made modern without a Jewish presence. Fewer than 50 years on, Russian Jews, most of them assimilated or half-assimilated, certainly non-religious, began their migration to Israel. A half-century earlier, as we noted, Arendt, spoke about the nationality that was denied the Jews, leaving them with nothing but their nakedness as human beings. Their killers carried around in their heads images of the Jew as the rational economic man, stripped vengefully of his clothing and going deservedly to his death. Non-Jews incorporated these images into their specific national ethnic tribalisms.

America, innocent of poisonous ethnic nationalism, universalized to the highest degree the ideal of "*homines rationalistici artificiales.*"[96] In the United States, ethnic nationalism mattered far less:

> Mid-twentieth America was a country of universal nakedness because America's commitment to capitalism seemed boundless and because the American nationality was, by European standards, chimerical. Once again, however, the most consistent 'rootless cosmopolitans' in America were Jews. No one else was as secular, urban, and meritocratic as the Jews were less patricidal [as they were in Czarist and Soviet Russia] because they were more patriarchal—more attached to the rituals, relatives, and conventions that make life meaningfully tribal. Of all the modern revolutions, the most uncompromising had been the Jewish one.[97]

Tribalism, the instinct common to all human communities, in whatever forms it finds expression, is a diffused, sometimes a sharp, feeling to which they turn and work hard to maintain. It can lose its *élan* and urgency when a balance between the obligations of citizenship in a more comprehensive and inclusive political structure and loyalty to one's smaller community is reached and stabilized. When that equilibrium is upset, the primal sense of urgency reasserts itself. The tribal memories come rushing in and take center stage. For many Jews, the prospect of loss and the threat of attack are omnipresent. Indeed, even when the balance seems stable, many Jews, living even under the most benign of times and regimes, will fall back on the argument that it is its "impending" or "inevitable" collapse that explains Jewish survival, There are such undertones of fear, exasperation and rage, we have seen, even in Philip Roth's reflections on Jewishness, but there are also highly distinctive and positive affirmations in his expressions of joy in the way his protagonist fearlessly celebrates it, not so much as a member of

the tribe, but in his unique way of claiming membership in it, no matter how much it might offend and alienate Jews who disapprove of his brand of Jewishness.

If Roth is not the most representative of Jews—but what Jew could fit that description—his highly individualistic stance is nevertheless not surprising and may be considered as yet another illustration of the seemingly infinite range of differences that distinguished Jews during their long history. The extraordinary point is the series of unexpected consequences of Jewish dispersal, followed by 200 years of ambiguous, uneasy, and largely failed assimilation. In the period that followed—more decidedly than ever before—the Jewish dispersal may be seen as a psychologic phenomenon, rather than a geographic one. Of course, the state of Israel has radically changed both the psychology and the geography, while creating new perspectives on meanings of the Jewish past. The mixes of geography, history, and memory are determinative, but not everywhere the same, and bring into relief different outcomes; and wherever different expressions of Jewish victimhood arise, the fact that it has not been entirely erased from Jewish consciousness creates bonds of Jewish sympathy for Jews everywhere. If this remains an ineradicable and overriding concern, however great the strides made in the "Jewish Century," the question of how to move beyond the battlements cannot be avoided. Voltaire complained that the Jews were kept, and kept themselves, in a state of bondage by an implacable God. Jews have progressed from the time when they lived in the shadow of others, who defined them almost totally in negative terms, and they have taken a step away from such a narrowing and repressive act. But they still may ask themselves if they can be reasonably sure that their anxieties will be lifted and laid to rest.

This is only one aspect of the question that Jean Daniel, the editorial director of *Le Nouvel Observateur*, asks.[98] Are Jews in danger of creating a series of misperceptions that will confine them in a prison of dangerous assumptions that will not serve them well? It is as if the old images are so deep that they will not die, or at least not disappear from view. One may add that the Jewish quest for a life of freedom and tolerance that sparked emancipation and led to integration—the search for an exit from the prison of their past—may be reversed by a blind plunge into a prison of their own making. The walls of the prison rest, for Daniel, on three foundations. The first, oldest, and, in its most narrow and exclusivist interpretation, is the conviction that the Jews are the chosen people. The second and third are the political uses that have been made of the Holocaust in Israel and elsewhere so that everything pertaining to Jewish existence is seen exclusively within the terms set by an Israel that demands absolute allegiance in return for its assurance that the Holocaust will never be repeated as long as Jews support the Israeli nation-state unreservedly.

Daniel is aware of modern Jewish attempts to widen the notion of the chosen people, reminding us, first, that the Jews accepted God's challenge to take on the yoke of chosenness. God turned to them only after he had approached other peoples who turned him down. But he stops short in assimilating non-Jews to Jews. He deplores any kind of arrogance that Jews might exploit to cast themselves in a superior light, and he thinks of chosenness as an opportunity for Jews to serve as witnesses and priests, for that can be its only meaning. If they are to survive and at the same time be the bearers of a universal message to humanity, they must restore those crucial elements of Jewishness. If this cardinal teaching of Judaism is forsaken, and if Israelis and the Jews of the Diaspora will risk everything by surrendering to idolatry by identifying Judaism solely with the land, and also forget that their role as wanderers, not tied to, nor worshippers of, territorial dominion, has meaning as well, the Election of the Jews will have lost its *raison d'être*. Very much of this sense of fraternity, he says, suffuses Gabriel Josipovici's meditation on the choices faced by Franz Kafka, Walter Benjamin, Paul Celan, and Aharon Appelfeld, the great Jewish wanderers, who could not find any resting place.[99] Daniel, like Josipovici, is an unbeliever and an assimilationist, but only in the sense of reaffirming the principles of Jewish emancipation, with its vows to join in resistance to coercion and to support and advance democratic participation in an open world that welcomes all peoples who share the ethics of tolerance, free expression and resistance to illegitimate authority. He shares a solidarity with fellow-Jews without overlooking how they differ among themselves. As an unbeliever, he "accepts a yoke, [while] the believer experiences a blessing."[100] He proclaims himself to be a dissident Jew who, like all Jewish dissidents, from Flavius Josephus to Edmund Husserl, identify themselves with members of the human species and its history, and to the "historicity of texts." They are the Jewish unbelievers, "out of a wish not to be renegades or victims of self-hatred," who conduct themselves "like religious people … not feeling that they are the ones summoned to holiness, [and who choose] to make their emotional nest and find their spiritual blossoming in family or in a community that persecution periodically strengthens." Jewishness, then, for Daniel is ecumenical because it is universal, and it is also particular and singular. "In a certain sense," he continues:

> [O]ne could say that believers have gratefully accepted incarceration in this monastery-prison from which they could not escape without abjuring their vow of fidelity and belonging. Unbelievers, on the other hand, chose voluntarily, deliberately, and continuously to live in a prison where holiness was no longer being practiced and whose bars they built themselves, but where they do not rule out the possibility of a hidden god punishing them for wanting to leave. In the end, to leave prison is to leave oneself. The unbelievers feel even more 'chosen' than the others. But they do not know it.[101]

Are they, however, the same prison? Does he reject the prison of the believers for fear that it might engulf the prison of the unbelieving volunteers like himself? We might conclude that he chooses a dissident form of chosenness to prevent the chosenness of the believers from imprisoning both in one prison cell. But he puts a positive slant on his unbelief. "[A] dissident is neither indifferent nor alien to orthodoxy. He separates himself from it but he refers to it, and his dissidence would have little meaning without the orthodox reference he questions."[102] Atheism, in a nutshell, can have no meaning outside a context of belief.

And this takes us back to Spinoza. He did not think of himself as an atheist, but for long he was thought to be one. Would he himself have justified his excommunication on the ground that he abjured Judaism's central beliefs and thus shut himself off from the community of believers? Efforts have been made to rehabilitate or to rejudaise him, as Joseph Klausner tried to do, declaring null the ban of excommunication and welcoming his return as a brother.[103] The excommunication, in the eyes of Yizhak Halevi Herzog, the Chief Rabbi of Israel in 1953, was only meant as a warning in Spinoza's lifetime and was not specified for future generations.[104] The diffuseness and ambiguity of these pronouncements do not tell us much more than the fact of the interminable indeterminacy that surrounds the various responses among Jews to assimilation, dissidence, rebellion, all of them tinged with the shadows of indifference and forgetfulness. Daniel refuses to accept either apathy or amnesia. This is clearly his answer to Spinoza's declaration that nothing remains of the Jew when he gives up his belief in Election and the Covenant. Spinoza took himself out of the community as much as the community declared him to be an unfit member of it. Daniel and the other dissidents whom we have looked at try to live inside the ambiguities with varying degrees of logic and success. Though proud to think of himself as one of Judaism's marginal members, he does not, it seems, want to shut himself away from Judaism. He longs for it to embrace the fullest range of Jewish diversity; he is not happy with orthodoxy. For him Judaism can still be a house of many mansions where there is room for all Jews, although, as Oliver Leaman does not hesitate to point out, much depends on how confident they will be to live as Jews in a future of declining Jewish population.[105]

We will pause at this point to bring up another image, which is caught in a few lines from the twentieth-century poem, *Spinoza*, by Jorge Luis Borges, written in a land not too far from the South American territories visited by Voltaire's Everyman:

> He's free, from metaphor and myth, to sit
> Polishing a stubborn lens: the infinite
> Map of the One who now is all His stars
> [Libre de la metáfora y del mito
> Labra un ardup crystal: el infinito
> mapa de Aquel que est todas Sus estrellas].[106]

# 8 Conclusion

If Voltaire were alive today, he might be pleasantly surprised to find that his appeal to Isaac de Pinto to think as a philosopher, that is, in one of his meanings of the term—as a critic of prevailing practices—was more or less the path that, as we have seen, considerable numbers of Jews in France have taken, either as philosophers, members of the liberal professions, or public intellectuals. At the same time, he would be puzzled to discover that most of them were, after the traumas and disappointments of assimilationism in its various manifestations, quite able to live both as Jews and as Frenchmen.[1] We must also recall that Voltaire asked Isaac de Pinto to leave his Jewishness at home. This double request had not been meant as a call to the wider Jewish community, which he contemptuously referred to as "your nation," to join instead the ranks of the enlightened and become citizens of a larger community. He not only knew that Jews like de Pinto were few, but also that it was not likely that the Jews as a whole would or could. Ever opposed to particularism, he went on to say that Jewishness was a domestic loyalty, best kept out of sight. When he spoke of "homeland," rather than "nation," he associated it with good government, as when he said, that "you have a country under a good king; you do not have one under a bad king," but more important for him was the idea that a homeland is constituted when people whose private interests, such as protecting their lives and property, discover that others share these goals as well, when, in short, private interests become the general interest.[2] Unfortunately, on the international scene, a nation's prosperity was gained by reducing another's ("Patrie," *OC*, 36, 411–15). Jews were, however, destined to live outside any homeland. He remarked, for example, how they had been scorned and burned in Coimbra and could not possibly feel at home in Jerusalem, occupied as it was by the Turks. The Jew, he said, does not have "a square foot of land anywhere on earth that belongs to him."[3] Now, it seemed that territory was an essential condition for the constitution of a homeland; and this was not what Jews possessed. Such would be, he appeared to say, their eternal condition. The Jew belonged nowhere and yet he was everywhere; neither an integrated being in a fixed place, nor a true cosmopolitan. He was, in short, a liminal being.

We have already seen how de Pinto responded to Voltaire. We may turn now to a question that has not been sufficiently emphasized in the emancipation movement linking Enlightenment ideals of human rights, citizenship, incipient concepts of the nation, and sovereignty to their Revolutionary manifestations in 1789, beginning with the promulgation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, the principles of which were absorbed and enshrined in the constitutional instruments by means of which different French regimes established their legality and authority, including the attempt by Vichy to establish its own bona fides. I keep returning to Vichy, because, while it has been treated by some as a brief and aberrant episode, it contains elements from the original thoughts and debates on the measurement of citizenship that were of concern to the Constituent Assembly. As we have seen, and, as I wish to reemphasize, Vichy brought to the surface the unsettled question of how authority is to be exercised for the purpose of keeping intact the rights of man and citizen while satisfying the integrity of the nation-state. Vichy forced the question in one direction. Its legal strategy should not, however, be considered exclusively as a departure from the political traditions that presumably, on all grounds, pointed France towards an unequivocal strengthening of the principles of inclusive citizenship. That ideal was, however, hedged around with exceptions in the changes that were introduced in 1789.

I want first of all to refer to a judicial opinion uttered in the very last years of the *ancien régime*, before the concept of nation was transformed, revolutionized, and identified with the deliberations and achievements of the Constituent Assembly. The opinion, handed down in 1784, refuted the accusation that Abraham Vidal, a Bordeaux Jew, could not be a Frenchman. The pre-revolutionary jurist who delivered it enunciated in clear tones the sentiment that citizenship was established almost solely by nationality, though he did not question the power of divine-right monarchy to determine its parameters:

> In vain would one object that he [Abraham Vidal] was a Jew in order to conclude that he was not at all a Frenchman? In France, as elsewhere, it is not one's religion, but one's origins, one's birth, that makes one French or someone from any other nation; whether one is atheist or deist, Jew or Catholic, Protestant or Mohammedan, matters little: if one is [born] in France of a French mother and father, if one has in no way expatriated oneself, one is a natural Frenchman and enjoys all the rights of a citizen.[4]

Some 150 years later, in 1944, Pierre Vidal-Naquet's father and mother, Lucien and Margot, were sent to their deaths at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Two years earlier, Lucien recorded his deep disappointment as a Frenchman for the injuries he was made to bear as a Jew, who, like other Jews, lived a secular life but never concealed his Jewishness. The injuries did not dampen

his beliefs in the ideals of the Republic and his feelings of solidarity with the Protestant communities in Saint-Argève and Dielefit who gave the family shelter and made it possible for the children to survive. Vichy alone was responsible for the deportations—not the general population.[5]

Voltaire was unable to take the question of nationality and citizenship as far as the judge of the *ancien régime* took it. He could not foresee the possibility of a widespread Jewish withdrawal from the beliefs and rituals of a long and oppressive past that in large part, he believed, was self-inflicted and self-willed. Nor, it must be said, did he have any strong concept of citizenship. He repeated the general notion that citizens were equal in democracies, but he would certainly have agreed with the author of the article in the *Encyclopédie* that, even in the most perfect democracy, total equality is a chimera and that "[t]he best government is not the one that is immortal but the one that endures the longest and the most peacefully."[6] Voltaire gave a little more thought to the question as when, singling out property-owners, he declared that when they pursue their common interests they become "a part of the whole, a part of the community, a part of the sovereign power."[7] It was left to others, Rousseau among them, to take up the question of sovereignty, and he did so without putting the interests of any social group first. It was left to still others to locate those areas in which Jews might be rescued, if not always voluntarily, by measures of coercion, gentle at best, and lead to their emancipation. The abbé Grégoire enunciated this view perhaps better than others who took up the same theme. It was not unlike another of his projects, for example, the replacement of regional dialects with French as an instrument of national unity. Indeed, the notion of nationhood, quite foreign to Voltaire, was what formed a wall of separation between Voltaire's Enlightenment universalist beliefs and the French Revolutionary impulse to achieve a common standard by means of which an entire population, hitherto divided by language, religion, and ethnicity could forge a civil society. Jews were to be shaped into productive laborers, freed from the occupations that made them pariahs in the eyes of Christians. The expectation, though it was not fully explored, was that whatever features Jews exhibited as members of a special tribe or people, should not intrude on the demands of the public sphere in which presumably all entitled to citizenship would not be differentiated or identified as members of a specific human group. By juxtaposing Grégoire's and the Bordeaux jurist's notions of citizenship, we may see that, however sovereignty was conceived, nationality was the necessary condition for participation in civil society. Grégoire saw it as an educative process that would test eligibility, while the Bordeaux jurist made no such conditions. The other point worth making is that, once such a group, as in the case of Jews, was identified as requiring an apprenticeship in productive labor aimed at extinguishing their association with commerce in usury, which was despised as parasitic, an indissoluble link would be forged between duties and rights.

In the Constituent Assembly's debates on the final formulation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, Grégoire favored limitations on rights by affirming that duties cannot be deduced from rights but must be thought of as balancing them.[8] "The deputies chose radical individualism," Marcel Gauchet asserts, "over the doctrine of rights," adding that "rights would permanently be saddled with the ghost of duties" and that "even before the official return of the doctrine of duties in Year III, its shadow hovered over the debate of 1793."[9] In fact, the first Declaration stated in its preamble that man's inalienable and sacred natural rights were to be matched by duties, but the Assembly set the concept of duties aside in favor of the idea that the protection of rights was the primary obligation of the state; that this was the aim of organized society; indeed, that the social state embodied the general will, but not in, as we shall see, the sense that Rousseau gave to it.[10] The reality, however, was the impossibility of maintaining a doctrine of unlimited rights. Was there an asymmetry between the rights of the sovereign with whom the citizens contract and the rights of the citizen, and, indeed, of man? Rousseau took up the question of duties seriously, "all the services he (the citizen) can render it (the state) as soon as the Sovereign requests them," but he contextualized them within his broader approach to the question of how an equilibrium might be reached between the rights of the Sovereign and those of the citizen. He concluded, in his search for a solution to this dilemma, that the Sovereign alone can judge what is important,[11] and he took pains to distinguish the act of contract, which is prior to any institution of government, and the act that institutes the government, and which is, as he put it, but a Law. In this act, those who hold executive power are the officers, not the masters of the people who can appoint or dismiss them. But such a formulation, he added, if unqualified, ran the risk of creating disorder. Established governments may be changed only in the most critical conditions, that is, when their conduct becomes incompatible with the public good. It is clear for Rousseau that the inevitable lack of clarity on such a momentous question can give rise to the usurpation of sovereign authority by existing governments.[12] His aim is to preserve the concept of the Sovereign, which, in its perfect form, establishes a perfect symmetry "between the respective rights of the Citizens and the Sovereign, and between the duties that the former have to fulfill as subjects and the natural right, which they ought to enjoy in their quality as men."[13] He insists, with equal certainty:

> the very nature of the compact, every act of sovereignty, which is to say every authentic act of the general will, obligates or favors all Citizens equally, so that the Sovereign knows only the nation as a body and makes no distinctions between any of those who compose it. . . . [T]he sovereign power, albeit entirely absolute, entirely sacred, and entirely inviolable, does not and cannot exceed the limits of the general

> conventions, and . . . every man can fully dispose of the part of goods and freedom that has been left to him by these conventions.[14]

Thus, it also seems clear that the equal treatment of all flows from every authentic expression of the general will, and that the general will, according to the definition he gives it, is democratic. Although Rousseau went on to say that no fundamental law in the state could not be legitimately revoked, "not even the social compact,"[15] he left unclear how citizens could themselves avoid the threat to their rights by a misapplied law, even before presumably being able to challenge the original social contract.[16] In either circumstance, however, one likely outcome might be the introduction of extraneous arguments to affirm existing law, as indeed they were, and as we shall see, when the laws were bent during the Vichy regime to rob Jews of their citizenship and their lives, denying them the protection of their natural rights.

The question of natural rights figured prominently during the debate in 1789 on the respective rights of man and the citizen and the prerogatives of the sovereign, and was already one of the urgent issues expressed in the *cahiers de doléances* of the Third Estate. The preamble to the Declaration states that the sovereign nation is supreme when it speaks through its representatives, who constitute the nation. The fullest doctrine of rights was, however, not abandoned in the first instant of revolutionary euphoria, but it was partly compromised, perhaps inevitably, for two reasons. First, human rights universalism, as it was conceived by the parties to the debate, was woven out of existing strands of past customs and traditions that had particularized people and who were now to be wrenched from their backward and retrogressive *milieux* and set free on the assumption that their rational selves would create, through an imaginary equality of rights, a sovereign nation of Frenchmen, owing allegiance only to itself. Here, nationalism and a vague universalism were conjoined in an uneasy embrace. The sovereign French nation was, in fact, deemed to be paramount, embodied in the sovereign French popular will. It was as a body of Frenchmen that the drafters of the Declaration proclaimed the universality of mankind. Second, the old pre-revolutionary divisions were replaced by new ones, not in any retrograde spirit, but in response to real concerns over the capacity to carry the burdens of citizenship, which implied among other things what Rousseau called denaturing man before making him fit for civil society, and which was constituted to expand his liberty. In a very important respect, the Constitution of 1791 moved away from the Rousseauian model by declaring that the legislative power would not be able to make any laws that affect, and impose obstacles to, the exercise of natural and civil rights. But it left unexplored the ultimate question of how to determine if the law will always uphold rights, and whether it will uphold the rights of all, not only Frenchmen. The first steps taken towards meeting that goal were to be followed by several more, each registering changes in the social and economic

fabric of organized society. The makers of the 1791 Constitution, once it went beyond the idea of rationalizing the existing political order—the goal that Voltaire and other Enlightenment thinkers had in mind—changed it, located the source of authority in the nation, and, not least, liberalized but did not eliminate exclusions based on age and income. Even before duties became the object of debate, the invoked humanity was, thus, ringed with exceptions. It foreshadowed the shift from the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen to the 1795 Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and the Citizen, which enumerated, not so much the duties envisioned by Rousseau's notion of citizenship in a sovereign state, but rather a banal collection of what can only be considered a *bourgeois* commonplace book. Still, by stating in 1795 that citizens should both know and fulfill their duties, and that those who openly defied the law would be in a state of war with society, the question of proscription and inclusion remained open to debate and abuse.

Hannah Arendt points rather uncritically to the pre-revolutionary state's function to protect all its inhabitants regardless of nationality, overlooking the fact that nationality, as we know it, was hardly a factor in the development of the state's authority and obligations. Thus, she overlooks the history of the Old Regime's struggles with the Huguenots who were, to be sure, expelled on religious grounds, but it is hard to imagine that it was not carried out on the claim that the state could determine who did or did not earn the right to be counted as a subject conforming to the laws, including the laws regulating the practice of religion. The changes wrought by the Revolution raised a very different kind of specter. If it is understood that the principles of the Declaration were shackled to the idea that the nation takes precedence over the state, we may see how *in utero* human rights were acknowledged only as ethnic national rights. One does not have to agree with the importance Arendt gives to the way that the state came to see its function to balance out the tendencies of conflict in a class society that weaken the state, to agree with her that after the Revolution native citizens boasted of their superiority over naturalized ones, those who were not truly of the nation, that is by birth, and only tolerated by virtue of the state's according them citizenship and rights by law. As we shall see in a moment, Jews in Vichy France came to be regarded as an alien people, not entitled to the nation's protection, because of their religion, which made them foreigners. No conflation between aliens of the state and aliens of the nation, as in Nazi Germany, moved the constitutionalist experts in France, though they came close to fusing these notions.[17]

It is worth repeating, as we cast a glance back to the various phases in the history of Jewish assimilation, which it was thought would bring to an inglorious end the distorting images of Jews, to remind ourselves of the directions it took, that it was imbued with ambiguities from the start. They have endured, but under changing circumstances. Almost mid-way through the last century, just after the defeat of France in 1940, and before the

horrors of the Holocaust, we may find a telling instance, first, of the durability and justification of anti-Semitism, and, second, the ambiguities that surrounded the reception given Jews ever since the proclamation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in 1789. Over a century and a half later, in December 1941, the Conseil d'Etat, the supreme body in the French legal and administrative system established under the Vichy regime, approved a series of anti-Jewish statutes that stripped French citizens of Jewish origin of their full rights. In the words of Alfred Porché, its vice-president:

> In the eyes of the Conseil, it would be risky to spread around the countryside, under the guise of a 'return to the soil,' an almost exclusively urban and commercial population that has always shown itself radically inadept at farm work, from the most distant past to today, even in Palestine despite the Zionists' efforts, and in eastern France where it has been established in certain villages for centuries. It is to be feared that we will only wind up by spreading usury and the so-called 'black market,' no matter what precautions we take and however we arm ourselves. What is more . . . we run the risk of favoring the spread in the countryside of the extremist doctrines dear to too many Jews from Eastern Europe.[18]

Porché's pronouncement is a startling reminder that the animus directed against Jews continued to permeate official and intellectual circles. For François Furet, the surprising and frightening aspect of the French judicial system was "the absence of any reaction on the part of the civil servants who enacted all these measures, prosecutions, and confiscations."[19] What seems even more to the point is the surprising absence of any sustained discussion on how the legal experts got around the principles of the Declaration of Rights and produced a situation in which the Jews were legally excluded from its provisions. Did they simply ignore it, and, if so, how did they on jurisprudential grounds set Jews apart? Certainly, the defeat for which many blamed the Jews and the persistence of anti-Semitism played their parts. Considered together they raise the uncomfortable fact that the Declaration was not invoked as the final arbiter guaranteeing the protection of rights and citizenship. Nor were appeals made to the resacralization of the Declaration in the Constitutions that were put in place following every paralyzing crisis that challenged the legitimacy of one political regime after the other, not excluding the Second Empire, beleaguered and discredited by the Franco-Prussian conflict that opened the way to the Third Republic that also collapsed, once more in the aftermath of defeat.

There is something disingenuous in the view that for all that regime succeeded regime and constitution succeeded constitution, transforming the relations between the powers and symbols of the nation, its existence as a frame of reference and concept in terms of which people should think about

their existence in common would never be challenged, especially in an overall perspective of France's history that omits any reference to Vichy.[20] The emphasis, rightly so, should be on "their existence in common," but the author of these words veers away from their fundamental meaning. It would take half a century before official France acknowledged Vichy's, and, more importantly, French compliance in the destruction of the Jews, which can no longer be thought of as an unfortunate interlude, but rather as a conscious policy that most French people found acceptable.

With some degree of shame, Joseph-Barthélemy, Minister of Justice under Vichy for the years 1941–43, succeeding Raphaël Alibert, the man behind the Vichy statutes of October 3 and 4, 1940—the first of which defined a "Jew," and the second permitted the establishment of special camps to house stateless Jews—made a rather lame confession. According to Roger Worms's testimony at Barthélemy's trial, he confided that he had served, along with others in the ministry, only as a technician and as a lackey of Laval ["nous, nous ne sommes que des techniciens qui lui (Laval) servons de laquais"]. Barthélemy told Worms that in future there would be much to fear from "the legitimate anger of Jews, Freemasons and the hundreds of thousands who were interned by means of administrative measures."[21] In his *Mémoires*, he makes a few unspecific allusions to the Declaration of Rights. He writes that he is "inflexible on questions of high morality" which are those of the Declaration of the Rights of Man (justice, respect for persons, the nation's safety). "I long ago," he writes, "left the age of *metaphysics* to believe only in what is useful to the nation. [Infléxible sur certains principes de haute moralité qui sont ceux de la Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme (justice, respect de la personne, salut de la nation), il y a longtemps que je suis sorti de l'âge *métaphysique* pour ne plus croire qu'à l'utilité nationale]."[22] Yet, in the course of his duties, his notes reveal that he was sensitive to some of the weightiest principles laid down in the 1789 Declaration and in the Constitution of 1795, and even the most radical of all, the Constitution of 1793, covering the rights of property; the right of self-protection against arbitrary arrest and detention; the right of self-defense in a lawful hearing; the assurance that no law has retroactive effect; the right to freedom of religion; and the right of assembly.[23] But these private thoughts, buried in the state archives, did not make their way into his *Mémoires*. Instead, he obscured these constitutional principles under the legitimacy principle that, he averred, comes to light only through the exercise of power. In a transparently evasive turn, we see Barthélemy disavow any serious discussion of legitimacy. He refuses to engage in the problem of what he terms, "legitimacy by origin." It is, at this point in his *Mémoires*, written before his death in 1945, that we may see the confluence of his long career and his equally long study of how, as a constitutional expert, he believed the law might be called upon to deal with the problems of the modern democratic state. We may also see the lengths to which he felt it necessary to go to abandon the Jews and exclude them, as belonging to an

alien "race," from the constitutional reform project, which was under consideration by Vichy. In expiation, he fell back on the notion of power that he had developed over several decades, and asked, without specifying the conditions, whether a legitimate regime can exercise it illegitimately. Conversely, he stated that a government whose origins are doubtful could become legitimate through the exercise of power. "Insurrection against a regime, however doubtful its origins, is itself illegitimate if it should cause more evil than the maintenance of a tolerable government."[24]

Is this what impelled him to indulge in self-justification—thereby stretching the notion of a tolerable government? In a long life, these words attest to a consistent juridical and political position, dating from the early twentieth century, which he refined and elaborated during the post-First World War period, through to the onset of the Second World War, and beyond.[25] For him, the crucial answer to the question of survival, once the state was formed, not excluding the state that speaks for the democratic nation, must be to ask if it has the determination to use power to defend itself. Citing examples of past regimes that had the support of the electorate, Barthélemy tried to demonstrate that the popular will sanctioned the full use of state power. And how other than through its elected representatives in the National Assembly in 1940 was this to make itself felt? So it was in the events leading to Vichy as it was in previous regimes, when emergency measures were periodically introduced. Referring condescendingly to the British and American determination to preserve their free institutions, he appealed to the crisis of war and capitulation, which they had the good fortune to escape, as the decisive factors that led to the exclusion of Jews in the name of the law. The promise of assimilation was tested and broken.

What should catch our eye is Barthélemy's *non mea culpa*, that as a technician he had no power to change a course he had no hand in initiating. This bit of *legerdemain* does not sit well. As a jurisprudentialist, constitutional scholar, and as a state minister, with a long record as a leading legal theorist, he cannot absolve himself by declaring that he was, as a technician, merely following orders and executing the measures of state as they were determined by higher ups. The alacrity with which those in power, particularly members of the legal professions and the bureaucracy, embraced the processes that confiscated the property and sanctioned the death of Jews by dispatching them to the camps, remains a terrible and horrifying stain. The effort to comprehend this astonishing reversal of the equalitarian roots of post-1789 France may be best told in a study of the cultural and religious contexts that were not unequivocally humane, liberal, and progressive, but were ambiguously and fatally part of a Catholic acceptance of forms of anti-Semitism that appeared benign but assumed malignant overtones in the thoughts and deeds of men like Barthélemy.[26] A counter-image of another kind of nation that could not easily abide a people who had, to their chagrin, manipulated their way into positions of power and influence, had

never lost its advocates and supporters, who spoke notionally of the "true" nation that owed nothing to, or should safely ignore, constitutional forms. The nation was seen at the time of the Dreyfus Affair—the most serious crisis testing the early Third Republic's capacity for survival—by Maurice Barrès, for example, as living beyond time, as greater than any individual, certainly as superior to any concepts, either of national or popular sovereignty, superior to the "aristocrats of thought," as he called the Dreyfusards, who came to the defense of liberal and democratic values. In the name of the primordial emotions that were never far from the surface of national consciousness, these apostles made a cult of the dead who were linked to the living in an unbroken chain that drew their vitality and their uniqueness from the very soil of France.[27] Like them, their imitators in successive generations questioned intellectual effort, ascribing to it a lesser value in the evolving life of a nation. Jurists like Barthélemy did not follow them in this respect. Indeed, as Richard Weisberg cogently, but perhaps too gently, argues, they had a high regard for the life of the intellect, and, as well, for the intricacies of legalistic thought, but at the same time they tortured the past by finding reasons to exclude Jews on the basis of their "Talmudic" forms of intellectual and legal dispute. Again, as the following citation shows and may be supported by other examples in Weisberg's study, Barthélemy hardly stands alone as an instance of cultural and psychologic commitment to a liberal Catholic outlook, marred disastrously by a kind of intellectual confusion that insisted on the differences between "Jewish" and "non-Jewish" thinking, but placing the first on a lower scale, and hence, a non-French one:

> The problem about Article IV (of the committee set up by Vichy to draft a constitution that was intended to guarantee equal protection and due process) was that we had to exclude Jews (il y a lieu d'exclure les Juifs). The committee tried to do so without so stating, by adopting the following formula: 'No one can be named to the Conseil national if he does not possess the general ability to accede to public functions; and if he is deprived of (or does not enjoy) his civil and political rights.'[28]

In Weisberg's words, this meant confirming that:

> Jews had their own laws and … were fundamentally incapable of understanding French national values. They were 'out' already. They constituted an absence from the beginning, because that law existed and was to develop only for the French, only for those entitled to be covered by its protections.[29]

The draft constitution, again in his view, "marries racial exclusion to liberal humanism."[30] It "thus reflected the degraded idealism of its primary creator. Barthélemy included the great prose of the 1780s and 1790s but he declined

to apply it to everyone."[31] As if taking its cue from Barrès, Article VI stated that "The French nation is the solidarity of a community of human beings animated by the desire to live together and in whom the soul is formed by traditions, memories, hopes, mores [*moeurs*], the attachment to the same soil, aspirations."[32]

Such florid prose would have had no place in Voltaire's catechism. His nation was a strictly utilitarian one, whose chief aim and purpose was to provide good government to its peoples, but from it he also excluded Jews by virtue of their homelessness and their singular loyalty to outworn beliefs and practices that had no place in an enlightened community which, after all, was the ideal world that he championed. And, more than these marks of disqualification, was his abhorrence of Jewish legalism, which he seems to have passed on to twentieth century interpreters of French constitutional law. Nor could this breach of liberal legality conceal the fact that at Riom, where Léon Blum was brought to trial for his alleged betrayal of France, there was free and open discussion between lawyers on both sides on the legality of Vichy's action against him and his co-defendants, and even more pertinently, on how Vichy's prosecutors could at one and the same time uphold the principles of the Declaration of 1789 and the long history of constitutional safeguards and deny them to designated portions of the population. Indeed, the egalitarian principles of 1789 remained intact because the 1875 constitutional laws were never repealed. Barthélemy saw no problem. He could justify the racial law and, in his *Mémoires*, he declared that he had no personal animus against Jews he knew personally. Were these particular Jews, one might ask, dejudaised sufficiently to be treated differently and thus included, not as most Jews who were treated differently and excluded?[33] Not unlike others—Barrès among them—Barthélemy placed ethnicity above democracy and his own liberal Catholicism. The goals of both were subordinated to nationhood based on ethnicity, which was defined in the case of Jews in religious terms, thus betraying the principles of liberal humanism. And one way to ensure that ethnicity would stand as a commanding principle was to make it difficult, if not impossible, to change names, requiring of those who asked for them to prove that they were not affiliated with the "Jewish race."[34]

The discourse on rights, which the Declaration initiated as a subject of political urgency, revealed its inner contradictions from its very inception. Soon enough the rationales for exclusion were extended to peoples who now had to face additional tests of admission to membership in the nation. That question was, we recall, nowhere on Voltaire's intellectual horizon. He did not condemn the Jews for their alleged "Talmudic," and hence alien, conception of French law, as did the legal hermeneuticists who served Vichy and ostensibly preserved the forms of equality, but by inventing new categories describing Jews, deprived them of them.[35] He excluded from his imagined enlightened society only those who refused to follow the command

of reason. Reason, or its absence, was the litmus test of enlightened discourse. Judaism, as a whole, not only in its legalism, was by its very nature, as he never stopped saying, its opposite, so that Jews, as long as they adhered to Jewish law, would be incapable of making the grade. In the end, it was by identifying Judaism solely as a religion that permitted the Vichy lawyers to differentiate their law making from Nazi racial laws; and it was Voltaire's condemnation of the Jewish religion that bound them across the centuries in a posture of antagonism and hostility.

Slowly, but at last in 1995, some 50 years after the end of the Vichy regime, the French government recognized the French state's role in the mass deportation of Jews during the Holocaust. In 2007, in a ceremony at the Pantheon, President Jacques Chirac honored nearly 2800 French men and women, the "Righteous of France," both living and dead, who rescued Jews from the Nazis. Thus, the Pantheon, France's powerful symbol of its past, now memorializes citizens who risked their lives. The ceremony reasserted France's republican ideals, completing a round of rituals that began in 1989 with the pantheonization of the abbé Grégoire.

Voltaire gave no thought as to whether the state should be the agent to set down criteria for those qualified for inclusion as full members of civil society. Nor would he have been at ease in the revolutionary discourse, not least because it owed so much to Rousseau. Democracy brought problems, but these were not fully perceived by Rousseau or Spinoza, both of whom saw in the social contract the best hope for human beings in organized society to achieve fuller freedom and that they could do so only when they agreed that the rights they enjoy are sanctioned by law. But, unlike Rousseau, who saw that the governors might—and this he did not consider only as a theoretical threat—illegitimately act in the name of the sovereign, while in fact usurping its authority and betraying it—Spinoza remained unperturbed in his support of democracy. The practice of democracy remained for Voltaire a short moment in classical history. Though Athens' reputation was still alive, democracy had no place in the modern world of large states. However, he tossed the question about in two directions. He said, for example, that democracy's great vice was not, as some would have it, tyranny and cruelty, but confusion among those at the top of the political hierarchy who considered what might be the best form of government, and those who, at the bottom of society, submitted obediently to a single head. Voltaire did, however, come somewhat feebly to the defense of republicanism and democracy, declaring that the critics of both always fell back on the presumably inviolable principle "that men are very difficult to govern," conveniently forgetting that the Jews had only God as their master, and "look what happened to them as a result: they have almost always been beaten and enslaved, and today they make a fine spectacle, don't you think?"[36] He could not resist the jibe against the scriptural foundations of priestly and secular authority. For him, the notion of good government could only mean the rule of reason,

the paramount but fragile achievement in the long history of the human species.

Spinoza declared that, if the Jews at some time in the future reestablished a state, it would be because of their belief that God was their terrestrial as well as their spiritual ruler, a veritable theocracy—religion and the state being one. The continued existence of the Jews was owing to "the hatred of other nations" and is "demonstrated by historical fact." From this premise, he went on to say that "they (the Jews) will one day, given the opportunity—such is the mutability of human affairs—establish once more their independent state, and that God will again choose them." But while, the mark of circumcision remained the mark that would preserve the Jews forever, he said that their election whether:

> temporal or eternal, as far as it is peculiar to the Jews, is concerned only with the nature of their commonwealth and their material welfare; . . . whereas in respect of understanding and true virtue there is no distinction between one nation and another, and in regard to these matters God has not chosen one nation before another.
>
> (*TTP*, Ch. 3, citations from pp. 99–100)

Thus, he struck down what he thought was a misplaced and misunderstood notion of election. For Voltaire, any identification of the welfare of religion with the welfare of the state was proof of Jewish subservience to a demanding and unforgiving God. Neither thinker believed that this was the way to human liberation.

Looking back, we may say that Voltaire helped to set in motion, and fostered, not lessened, the ambiguities and uncertainties arising from the Enlightenment's impact on the course of Jewish emancipation, acculturation, and assimilation. He wanted to crush the pieties and the superstitions that reigned unchallenged and were used to justify the human indignities of arbitrary violence, suffering and death, and to persuade human beings in the long run, in the very long run, to be sure, to ask what it is they ought to value in their daily and in their future lives. Voltaire's cautious plea makes it all the more difficult to see him turn his back on a section of humanity. It is as if he suffered from what may be called cultural autism, an inability to step into the shoes of others, an incapacity to read their minds, to imagine the world from their viewpoint. There is something of a paradox in this. Although his historic imagination largely failed him in his depiction of the Jewish past, his critical intelligence unintentionally opened up a Jewish future. Without being able to overcome his distaste for and hostility to Judaism, and to take the next step to reimagine the Jewish past and the continuing Jewish presence in an alien world, Jews themselves, as we saw, did in fact take the steps to reimagine themselves. They achieved this in an atmosphere of intense debate, as they faced the prospects and promises of a freer world created by economic change and the extinction of the ancient

privileges that had kept them vulnerable in a politically closed regime. Even so, when they looked at their newly emancipated condition and realized that their position in society had become less precarious, they knew that it might not escape marginality. That is why it was so important to seek reassurance, not only in the legal avenues opened to them as citizens by the Declaration, but also in its symbolic meanings. In the process they dealt variously with their ancient and more recent memories. Some of the older Jewish self-images were rejected, but many continued to have longer lives. Thus, as has happened in the continuities and discontinuities of a long Jewish past, hybrids of old and new loyalties were created.

At best, we can only catch a glimpse of what may lie ahead. What is not disputable, at least in France, is that the old nationalist Right, if it is not in a totally moribund state, has begun to lose its political voice. Faced by an alliance of liberals, Socialists and fringe groups on the Left in the elections of 2002, who wearily and somewhat reluctantly put their support behind Jacques Chirac, Jean-Marie Le Pen suffered significant losses. The Right's challenge to the Enlightenment's legacy remains, of course, indisputable, but its hard core has, in fact, changed very little over generations, as may be gathered by its fringe publications that keep alive the hatreds of the past. In any event the main struggle to determine which groups and parties have the better claim to be the Enlightenment's rightful standard bearer will be between the groups, ranging from the Center to defectors from the Left, who have joined Sarkozy's cabinet, and may constitute, for a conservative-minded French electorate, a refined version of Le Penism, and a Left that may yet regain its capacity to assert the right to carry it.

How we may further identify the twenty-first century's heirs and opponents of the Enlightenment is, nevertheless, not easy. The key to unlock the door may be found in the disputes among the Jewish intellectuals, the descendants of the Jews, whom Voltaire berated, but who proved him wrong, when they found their way to participation in French culture. This long preparation in the nineteenth century and in the aftermath of the 1939–45 War permitted them to retrieve the Enlightenment's shattered pieces and to rise to its defense, working to mend, even to revitalize it, above all, by reaffirming the principles of the Declaration. In their memories lay the shameful assault by those who unctuously praised, yet betrayed the Republican model in the prelude to and during Vichy in the name of an ethnic nationalism that distinguished between "authentic" and "non-authentic" Frenchmen, for want of a legally binding, but incoherent, set of definitions. They did so amidst the continuing phenomenon of denial, even in the ranks of the Left, of complicity in Vichy's anti-Semitism, including that of François Mitterand, which doubtless left a lasting impression on their minds and spirit.

Today, the defenders of the Republican model, who say that they are holding aloft the principle of *laicité*, would deny Muslim immigrant groups any exceptions from it. They oppose it to a rough hewn multicultural one,

which they believe will ultimately change the face of France. In short, they argue that a full-blown ethnos, this time, with non-assimilable religious tones—much more marked than it had ever been with its Jewish population, is to be avoided in France. On the other side of the divide, the multicultural model is seen as the only way to save the Republic's integrity and preserve Enlightenment values. It would make generous room for new immigrants to enforce Islamic religious prohibitions, and would not bar the way to the processes of joining the national stream. The defenders of each model argue that theirs meets the goal of maintaining the nation-state. For the adherents of the Republican model, however, ethnos must be subordinated and indissolubly linked to the primacy of the nation-state. Such an undertaking would not constitute a betrayal either of the Enlightenment or democracy. Ethnos, according to the Republican model, is to be tolerated within bounds that recognize the primacy of the secularized nation-state, a goal that is supported by Jewish intellectuals, even some erstwhile Socialists. But they may have forgotten how its power darkened and took the lives of many during Vichy. Their fear that an Islam that resists secularization, unlike Judaism that sought to be integrated in mainstream society by agreeing to make religion a matter of private confession, rather than accord it primacy of place, may be greater than their ability to imagine that Islam might be persuaded and persuade itself to make the needed accommodation to adopt the values of the Republic. The adherents of the multicultural model, while not disputing the integrity of the nation-state, are more willing to give ethnos a greater role, and believe that it would not collide with the principles of the Enlightenment. They accuse their opponents of favoring imperialism under the guise of a respect for the rights of others.

The seemingly long-vanished debate about the place of Jews and the place that Jews saw for themselves in the nation-state, hearkening back to the nineteenth and to the last century, has been transformed by demography, economics, and by peoples from non-Western cultures. Voltaire, we may recall, admired and spoke warmly about Islam's accomplishments, contrasting them with Judaism's lack of openness and hostility to other cultures, but his references were to the years of Islam's early and tolerant ascendancy. He, of course, would not know how, in the centuries that followed, sections of Islam would shut themselves off from the currents in Western thought that led to the abandonment of religious intolerance and the flowering of secularism, which, during his lifetime, he sought hard to make an acceptable part of, and give new meaning to, Western culture.

# Notes

## Preface and acknowledgments

1 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, R. J. Hollingdale (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. The phrase "children of the Enlightenment" appears in section 55, p. 41. The locution "banner of the Enlightenment" appears in section 26, p. 26. Citations are from these sections. Nietzsche's prediction that metaphysics would disappear as a mode of thought is to be found in section 9, pp. 15–16.
2 J. Kramer, "Spice Routes. Claudia Roden's Culinary Diaspora," *New Yorker*, 3 and September 10, 2007, p. 97.

## Introduction: Enlightenment and its discontents

1 A trio of brief older studies exists: H. Graetz, "Voltaire und die Juden," *Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenshaft des Judentums*, 1867, vol. 16, 321–30; H. Solow, "Voltaire and Some Jews," *Menorah Journal*, 1927, vol. 13, 186–97; H. Emmrich, *Das Behandlung des Judentum bei Voltaire*, Breslau: Priebatsch, 1930.
2 That there were favorable non-Jewish images of Jews and Judaism in eighteenth century France forms the basis of an article by B. E. Schwarzbach, "Receptiveness to An Idea. A Search for Relatively Positive Representations of the Jew in Enlightenment France," *The European Legacy*, 2000, vol. 5, 7–27.
3 One of the great merits of A. Sutcliffe's admirable book, *Judaism and Enlightenment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, is his close analysis of the Christian meanings given the Jews before the Enlightenment, which underlines the crucial importance of how religion was not simply to be resisted but how, even in Voltaire's attack, it was in the foreground as much as in the background in determining Enlightenment discourse. See also, F. Oz-Salzberger, "The Jewish Roots of Western Freedom," *Azure*, 2002, no. 13, 1–24 for a discussion of the Judaic origins of early modern political thought in England. Online. Available. <http://azure.org.il/magazine/magazine.asp?id=230&searchtext=> (accessed March 9, 2007).
4 Ibid., 12.
5 This interpretation, the source of much scholarly and intellectual dispute, was first argued by M. Horkheimer and T. W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, J. Cumming (trans.), New York: The Seabury Press,1969. I will discuss some of its key points in Chapter 7. R. Wokler, "The Enlightenment Project and Its Critics," has them in mind as his starting point in his analysis of critics of the Project, including M. Foucault and J. Derrida, C. Taylor and M. Sandel, among others, and asks them to remember that Voltaire was the "standard bearer of the

Enlightenment's confrontation with fanaticism," pointing out the "post-modern and communitarian indifference to the principles for which he stood." See Wokler's essay in S. E. Liedman (ed.) *The Postmodernist Critique of the Project of Enlightenment*, Amsterdam and Atlanta, Ga.: Rodopi, 1997, 13–30.

6 See P. Cohen Albert, "Israelite and Jew: How Did Nineteenth-Century French Jews Understand Assimilation," in J. Frankel and S. J. Zipperstein (eds.) *Assimilation and Community. The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 88–109. She says quite rightly that the history of the word, "assimilation" has yet to be written.

7 N. Elias, *Power and Civility. The Civilizing Process.* Vol. II. E. Jephcott (trans.), New York: Pantheon Books, 1982, pp. 312–13.

8 Ibid., p. 318. Elias offers a fuller discussion on pp. 312–33, including his conclusion.

9 A modern analogy may be found in the confusion arising from an identification of any criticism of Israel as a form of open or disguised anti-Semitism.

10 J. I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750*,Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. For a sampling of the responses to Israel's book, see J. B. Shank's review in *H-France Review*, March 2002, no. 26. Online. Available. < http://www.h-france.net/vol2reviews/shank.html > (accessed July 19, 2006); J. Sheehan, "Enlightenment, Religion, and the Enigma of Secularization: A Review Essay," *American Historical Review*, 2003, vol. 108, 1061–80; and A. Talbot, "Spinoza Reconsidered," www.wsws.org/articles/2003/aug2003/spina26_prn.shtml (accessed May 8, 2005).

11 J. I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested. Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670–1752*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 42.

12 See A. Cobban, "The Enlightenment and the French Revolution," in E. R. Wasserman (ed.), *Aspects of the Eighteenth Century*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967, 305–16 for his characterization of most of the *philosophes* as anti-egalitarian.

13 See S. Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, C. Naor (trans.), Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

14 J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*. Vol. I: *The Enlightenment of Edward Gibbon 1737–1764*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 295.

15 E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, F. C. A. Koelln and J. P. Pettegrove (trans.), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951.

16 A. Cobban, "The Enlightenment and Germany," *Spectator*, September 26, 1952, 406–7, cited in J. K. Wright, "A Bright Clear Mirror: Cassirer's *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*," in K. M. Baker and P. H. Reill, (eds.) *What's Left of Enlightenment?* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, 96–97.

17 I. Hont, *The Jealousy of Trade. International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2005, pp. 136, 504–5.

18 A. Cobban, *In Search of Humanity: The Role of the Enlightenment in Modern History*, New York: George Braziller, 1960, pp. 27, 89.

19 Ibid., p. 238.

20 For example, see the essays by J. Popkin, R. Chartier, R. Darnton, D. Roche, and M. Ozouf in K. M. Baker (ed.) *The Political Culture of the Old Regime.* Vol. I *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1987.

21 J. K.Wright, "A Clear Bright Mirror," 93. For similar views, see the essays in H. T. Mason (ed.) *The Darnton Debate. Books and Revolution in the Eighteenth Century*, *SVEC*, 1998, vol. 359, by J. Popkin, "Robert Darnton's Alternative (to the) Enlightenment," 105–28 and D. Gordon, "The Great Enlightenment Massacre," 129–56. Darnton's response to them and to the others in this volume follows in his essay, "Two Paths Through the Social History of Ideas," 251–94.

22 A. Cobban, *Aspects of the French Revolution*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1968, p. 28. Cf. D. Gordon, "Introduction: Postmodernism and the French Enlightenment," in D. Gordon (ed.) *Postmodernism and the Enlightenment*, New York and London: Routledge, 2001, 1–6.
23 Cobban, *Aspects of the French Revolution*, pp. 42–43.
24 For a fuller discussion of Tocqueville's focus on the new power of public opinion, see H. Mitchell, *Individual Choice and the Structures of History. Alexis de Tocqueville as Historian Reappraised*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, Ch. 9.
25 G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, J. Sibree (trans.), London: Co-operative Publication Society, 1900, p. 447.
26 J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, T. Burger with the assistance of F. Lawrence (trans.), Boston: MIT Press, 1991. The original German version was published in 1962, some 30 years after the publication of Cassirer's book.
27 R. Vierhaus, "Progress: Ideas, Skepticism, and Critique—The Heritage of the Enlightenment," J. B. Knudsen (trans.), in J.Schmidt (ed.) *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996, 330–41. Citation on 337.
28 Voltaire, "Philosophe," in Denis Diderot and Jean le Ronde d'Alembert, (eds.) *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonnée des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de letters*, Paris: Briasson, etc., 1751–65, vol. 11, 509–11. Facsimile, New York and Paris: Pergamon Press. Hereafter cited as *Encyclopédie.*
29 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p. 54.
30 Voltaire, "Gens de lettres," in *Encyclopédie*, vol. 7, 599–600. In his article, "Lettres, gens de lettres, ou lettrés," for the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, (*OC*, 36, 285–88), Voltaire writes that, unlike the bourgeois who buys an office and is supported by others of the same stripe, the man of letters has no such support. He resembles flying fishes. If he flies too high, the birds will devour him, and if he descends too low, the fish will eat him. Montesquieu's condemnation of prejudice is similar, but he relates it to acquiring knowledge of the self: " . . . I call prejudices not what makes one unaware of oneself. . . . Man . . . is equally capable of knowing his own nature when it is shown to him, and of losing even the feeling of it when it is concealed from him." See Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, A. Cohler, B. Miller and H. Stone (trans. and ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. xliv-xlv.
31 In light of her deep involvement as a refugee and the polemical and historical writings on the disaster of the Holocaust, H. Arendt was altogether far, far too optimistic when she concluded that the Jewish Question had "been washed away, as it were, by the catastrophe of European Jewry and is justly forgotten. . . . Besides, it never was anything but the creation of the Jewish intelligentsia and had no significance for the majority of Central European Jewry." See H. Arendt (ed.) *Walter Benjamin. Illuminations*, New York: Schocken Books, 1969, p. 29.
32 Such an approach has been partially treated in Frankel and Zipperstein, (eds.) *Assimilation and Community. The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe.* Frankel's opening essay, "Assimilation and the Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Towards a New Historiography," 1–37, offers a survey and analysis of the key Jewish historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, who have elaborated, through a highly charged atmosphere of intellectual exchange, the contexts and concepts that shaped the changing nature and rival interpretations of Jewish responses to emancipation, acculturation, and assimilation.

## 1 Spinoza, Bayle, and Voltaire: issues in contention

1 "Spinoza a fait ce qu'aucun philosophe grec, encore moins aucun Juif, n'a fait. Il a employé une méthode géometrique imposante, pour se rendre un compte net de ses idées."

2 Voltaire, *Métaphysique de Newton*, in R.L. Walters and W.H. Barber, (eds.) *Eléments de la philosophie de Newton*, in *OC*, vol. 15, 196.

3 That Spinoza's ideas were misunderstood in France is the burden of P. Vernière's classic account, *Spinoza et la pensée française avant la Révolution*, 2 vols. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954. Vol. 2, pp. 495–527. M. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons, and Republicans,* London and Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1981, studied the Spinozists and their influence almost thirty years later. More comprehensively, and at greater length, J. I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750,* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001 and *Enlightenment Contested. Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670–1752,* Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2006, make Holland and Spinoza central to the Enlightenment. In the first volume, he criticizes the neglect Spinoza endured—unjustifiable in his view—in earlier studies, such as P. Gay's, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 2 vols. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1966 and 1969. In his second volume, Chapter 26, especially, Israel sees a close harmony in Bayle's and Spinoza's rejection of creationism and their acceptance of a universe without God—the God of revealed religion—and he also disputes the argument that Bayle was a fideist. Bayle studies rest significantly on the landmark work of Elisabeth Labrousse who maintained that he was one. See her seminal book, *Pierre Bayle*, 2 vols. The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1963–64. For a brief introduction, see her *Past Masters* study, *Bayle*, D. Potts (trans.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983. Also, see E. James, "Voltaire and the Ethics of Spinoza," *SVEC,* 1984, vol. 228, 67–87. C. Porset lists the number of times Voltaire alluded to Spinoza. See "Note sur Voltaire et Spinoza," in O. Bloch (ed.) *Spinoza au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1990, 225–40. H. T. Mason's discussion in his *Pierre Bayle and Voltaire*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963, clearly sets out the issues, and concludes that by the time Voltaire softened his earlier criticism, he was prevented by his earlier views, from acknowledging the import of Spinoza's ideas.

4 See H. T. Mason, "Voltaire devant Bayle," in A. Mckenna and G. Paganini (eds.) *Pierre Bayle dans la république des lettres. Philosophie, Religion, Critique*, Paris: Honoré Champion Editeur, 2004, 444–56, esp. 450–51.

5 See L. Kolakowski, "Pierre Bayle and the Critique of Spinoza's Metaphysics of Substance," in Z. Janowski (ed.) and A. Kolakowska and others (trans.) *The Two Eyes of Spinoza and Other Essays on Philosophers*, South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2004, pp. 27–42 and R. H. Popkin, *The History of Skepticism. From Savonarola to Bayle*. Revised and Expanded. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 299. Popkin is referring to Bayle's discussions of Spinoza's ideas on existence, divine substance and extension. See *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, R. H. Popkin (trans.), Indianapolis, New York and Kansas City: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1965.

6 E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, F.C.A. Koelln and P. Pettigrove, (trans.), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951, pp. 199–209.

7 Popkin, *The History of Skepticism*, p. 301

8 See G. Pflug, "The Development of Historical Method in the Eighteenth Century," *History and Theory*, 1971, Beiheft 11, 3–23. For all that, it was Bayle's branding of Spinoza as an unbeliever that was enshrined, as it were, in the

French *Encyclopédie* where it was lodged as the conventional wisdom. *Encyclopédie*, vol. 3, 811–29.

9 "[I]l annonce Dieu en voulant le détruire."

10 Y. Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, 2 vols., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989. Vol. I, pp. 51–53.

11 Yovel puts it best: "He was a loner, the individual *par excellence*, who demands to be defined solely in terms of his private being and beliefs, not in terms of any social or historical framework, supposed to provide him with the essential ingredients of his identity." *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, vol. 1, p. 173. See also S. Nadler, *Spinoza. A Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 290–92 for Spinoza's alienation from Judaism, his admiration of Jesus, not as a divine, but as a human being and teacher, but his refusal to join any sect, let alone convert to Christianity.

12 See A. Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 89–99.

13 See S. B. Smith, *Spinoza, Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish Identity*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997. H. Chisick similarly reads Voltaire as a champion of a non-metaphysical, non-ritualized Judaism that Jews would be free to practice in the private sphere without constraint from the state: "Ethics and History in Voltaire's Attitudes Toward the Jews," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 2002, vol. 35, 596. See his other study, "Community and Exclusion in Rousseau and Voltaire. The Case of the Jews," in I. Y. Zinguer and S. W. Bloom (eds.) *L'antisémitisme éclairé. Inclusion et exclusion depuis l'époque des Lumières jusqu'à l'affaire Dreyfus*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003, 77–104.

14 Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 6–7.

## 2 Images, imagination, tolerance and the uses of reason

1 Voltaire, "Imagination," *Encyclopédie*, vol. 8, 560–63

2 For Roussseau's more expansive treatment of the imagination as essential to imaging and recognizing others to create the foundation of social life, while, in his own case, instilling in him a fear of social community, see R. D. Masters and C. Kelly (eds.) *Rousseau. Judge of Jean-Jacques: Dialogues*. Vol. 1. *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1990, esp. 119–27. B. Baczko, *Lumiéres de l'Utopie*, Paris: Payot, 1978, pp. 94–5, points out in addition his preference for imagination over reason in *Emile*, his *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, and *Les Considérations sur La Pologne*.

3 See M. Oakeshott's essay, "The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind," in *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1991, pp. 488–541. Quotation from p. 502.

4 M. C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 75–81. Quotation from p. 81.

5 H. Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment,* New York: Schocken Books, 2003, pp. 139–41. For a more balanced judgment of Kant's position on the nature and scope of the imagination, indeed, his fear of it as leading to loss of self-control, but even more importantly, as being useful only to the extent of enlarging our understanding, see H. Böhme and G. Böhme, "The Battle of Reason with the Imagination," J. Kneller (trans.) in J. Schmidt (ed.) *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996, 426–52.

6 H. Arendt, "Understanding and Politics," *Partisan Review*, 1953, vol. 20, 392.

7 E. H. Gombrich, *The Image and the Eye*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982, p. 272.

8 Y. Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, 2 vols, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989, Vol. I, pp. 153–4.
9 See also, S. B. Smith, *Spinoza, Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish Identity*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997, pp. 129–30.
10 S. Hampshire, *Spinoza and Spinozism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 73, points out that for Spinoza "ideas of the imagination or of 'vague experience' (*experientaa vaga*), [are] said to be passive, not active." It corresponds roughly to the distinction Voltaire made between the active and passive imaginations.
11 See D. Garrett, "Spinoza's Ethical Theory," in Garrett (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 295–6.
12 Ibid., p. 297
13 See, on this question, as well, J. I. Israel, "Pierre Bayle's Political Thought," in A. McKenna and G. Paganini (eds.) *Pierre Bayle dans la république des lettres. Philosophie, Religion, Critique*, Paris: Honoré Champion Editeur, 2004, 349–79.
14 Spinoza, *Tractatus Politicus*, p. 30, cited in J. I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 264. See also, E. Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, P. Snowdon (trans.), London and New York: Verso, 1998, passim, especially pp. 114–24, for his attempt to reconcile the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and the *Tractatus Politicus.*
15 S. B. Smith, *Spinoza's Book of Life: Freedom and Redemption in the Ethics*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003, also argues that Spinoza recognizes the power of imagination and emotion both of which trump reason, but that he nevertheless remains committed to it and to democracy. R. Prokhovnik, *Spinoza and Republicanism*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 169, claims that the *Tractatus Politicus* does not abandon democracy as much as preserve it in a new framework. R. N. Goldstein, stressing the *Ethics* rather than the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus,* views Spinoza as a strict rationalist and as a firm advocate of democracy. She also sees him as wedded to Jewish tradition, which remains a source of considerable controversy. See her *Betraying Spinoza: The Renegade Jew Who Gave Us Modernity*, New York: Schocken, 2006.
16 See D. Roche, "Juifs et Gentils à la vieille de la Révolution," in *Juifs en France au XVIIIe siècle,* sous la direction de B. Blumenkranz, Paris: Commision des Archives Juifs, 1994, 178–90, for his recognition of the psychological, religious, and social barriers that worked against easy comprehension of difference.
17 Kant would later distinguish between "*image* representations, whose proper function, is to make … concepts, not otherwise derived from experience, serviceable for *experiential use*." The concrete image in the first instance is an accidental sensual perception; if left out we may approach the concept of understanding, and is the gateway to the individual's orientation towards "purifying the common concept of its contradictions." But note that he says that the image is the foundation, however misleading, of how we may orient ourselves in thinking. See *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings*, A. Wood and G. de Giovanni, (eds. and trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 3–4.
18 J. Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973, p. 22.
19 Isaac de Pinto, *Apologie pour la nation juive, ou réflexions critiques sur le premier chapitre du VIIe tome des oeuvres de M. de Voltaire au sujet des Juifs. Par l'auteur de "l'Essai sur le luxe"*, Amsterdam, 1762, pp. 15–16. See Chapter 4 for a fuller analysis of de Pinto's economic views.
20 E. Gellner, *Language and Solitude*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 24.
21 "cet homme est un charlatan pétri d'orgueil, d'intérêt, et d'artifice; vous méprisez ce que vous révériez, et le préjugé au jugement."

22 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso Edition, 1983.
23 See J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971.
24 See L. Kolakowski, "The Two Eyes of Spinoza," in *The Two Eyes of Spinoza, and Other Essays on Philosophers*, A. Kolakowska and others. Z. Janowski (ed.) South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2004, 1–15 for a discussion of Spinoza's metaphysics—crucially his theory of indivisible substance—and the place of individuation, freedom and contingency in his thought.
25 See Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, pp. 76–98 for a fuller discussion, especially of the thorny problem of the conditions that would make affect and political authority converge through language and communication among all parts of the body politic.
26 Anderson, *Imagined Communities.*
27 Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, Ch. 6. Citation on p. 135.
28 "J'ai appelé ce siècle celui de Louis XIV, non seulement parce que ce monarque a protégé les arts beaucoup plus que tous les rois ses contemporains ensemble. … J'ai fixé cette époque à quelques années avant Louis XIV et à quelques années après lui: c'est en effet dans cet espace de temps que l'esprit humain a fait les plus grands progrès."
29 On Voltaire's distinction between allegorical fables and others that he labeled a heap of false tales, see (*OCM*, 11, 79–80).
30 Myth was not a word in use in Voltaire's time and he had no theory to explain the human need for myth. I will use "fable" as the term he used to designate a fiction or an untruth.
31 K M. Baker, "Revolution," in C. Lucas (ed.) *Political Culture of the French Revolution* Vol. II. *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, Pergamon Press: Oxford, 1988, 50–1. See also P. Sakmann, "The Problems of Historical Method and of Philosophy of History in Voltaire," *History and Theory*, 1971, Beiheft 11, 24–59, originally published as "Die Probleme der historischen Methodik und der Geschichts-philosophie bei Voltaire," *Historische Zeitschrift*, 1906, vol. 95, 327–79.
32 See J. François Lyotard, "Before the Law, After the Law," *Questioning Judaism. Interviews by Elisabeth Weber,* Rachel Bowlby (trans.), Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004, 109. Lyotard writes that the Jews, having lost their language after centuries following the Babylonian Captivity, voiced the Torah in another language, Aramaic: "So here is a people equipped, in fact, with written prescriptions, but no less equipped with a host of little, ordinary, and unlikely stories, of goatherds, shepherds, dromedaries, exchanges of women, thefts of land, exoduses, conflicts with the great empires, continual battles—and the people is going to have to hear the voice amid this disorder, hear the timbre of the eternal in the temporal, and 'invent' what it has to do to be just amid this tempest of unpredictable circumstances that is called history."
33 See A. Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews: The Origins of Modern Anti-Semitism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1968 and P. Gay, *Voltaire's Politics. The Poet as Realist*, Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1959. Reprint. Yale University Press: New Haven, Conn. 1988. In the Vintage edition (1965), Gay writes that he might have been more critical of Voltaire's anti-Jewish sentiments had he taken into account the "philo-Semitism" of thinkers like Montesquieu and Lessing, p. vii. See also, L. Poliakov. *From Voltaire to Wagner*. Vol. III. *The History of Antisemitism*, M. Kochan (trans.), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.
34 R. Desné and B. E. Schwarzbach believe that anti-Judaism is a more accurate designation than anti-Semitism. See R. Desné, "Voltaire était-il antisémite," in M.-H. Cotoni, *Voltaire. Dictionnaire Philosophique,* Paris: Klincksieck, 1994,

115–25; B. E. Schwarzbach, "Voltaire et les Juifs: bilan et plaidoyer," *SVEC,* 1997, vol. 358, 27–91. See also, E. Benbassa and J. C. Attias, *The Jews and Their Future. A Conversation on Judaism and Jewish Identities*, P. Camiller (trans.), London and New York: Zed Books, 2004, pp. 62–73.

35 J. I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism 1550–1750*, 3rd edn. London and Portland: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1998, p. 218, accepts Hertzberg's general assessment, but goes further, writing that, "By drastically lowering the prestige of Hebrew learning, and generally denigrating the Judaic heritage, the Enlightenment was a key factor in the cultural and intellectual degradation of European Jewry after 1700, a decline which came to be just as much publicized by friends and enemies of the Jews as their economic and social degradation." Yet, he shows, earlier, p. 212, that the decline in rabbinic authority and respect for Jewish tradition predated the full impact of the Enlightenment. It was not till Elijah of Vilna, the so-called Vilna Gaon (1720–97) made his erudite works known that a renewal of Judaism occurred, encapsulating rabbinic tradition, Kabbalah, history, geography, and astronomy. Apparently the Vilna Gaon looked to the secular and scientific studies that the Enlightenment encouraged.

36 See A. Arkush, "Voltaire on Judaism and Christianity," *American Jewish Studies Review*, 1993, vol. 18, 223–43.

37 See R. L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

38 J. Miles, *God. A Biography*, New York: Vintage Books, 1995, p. 94.

39 Cited by J. Goy, "Civil Code," in F. Furet and M. Ozouf (eds.) *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution,* A. Goldhammer (trans.), Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 438. The conventional antimonies that frame the question focus on the conflict between particularism and universalism, and pay little attention to the question of essentialism which also frames my discussion. For a contrasting view, see R. Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews. Representations of Jews in France, 1715–1815*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2003, pp. 165–68, 251–55.

40 See I. Davidson, *Voltaire in Exile. The Last Years, 1753–78*, London: Atlantic Books, 2004.

41 Voltaire's knowledge of biblical Jews was based on the Christian Greek version of the Tanakh or Hebrew Bible. There is a world of difference in thinking of the New Testament as an extension of the Old Testament, upon which the Christian version sits and alters its meaning by seeing it as a mere prologue to the New.

42 See A. Sen, "East and West: The Reach of Reason," *New York Review of Books*, 20 July 2000, vol. 47, 33–8. Sen has extended the action of reason in civil society from its presumably exclusive Western base to India in the late sixteenth century. He does not subscribe to the view that tolerance and the call to reason for social harmony flourished in the same way in all civilizations. But he does ask for a rejection of the view that values are always culturally bound or disharmonious.

43 See P. Lee, "The Genesis and Publication of Voltaire's Sermon du rabbin Akib," *SVEC,* 1997, vol. 347, 627–31.

44 See his article, "Voltaire et les Juifs: bilan et plaidoyer," 34–35.

45 D. Boyarin, "The Christian Invention of Judaism: The Theodosian Empire and the Rabbinic Refusal of Religion," *Representations*, 2004, vol. 85, 21–57. Quotes from 21–22.

46 "Si les Juifs manquaient morale ou manquaient à la morale, les Romains la connaissaient et lui rendaient gloire." For more discussion, see B. E. Schwarzbach, *Voltaire's Old Testament Criticism*, Geneva: Libraire Droz, 1971, pp. 251–54.

47 See M.Yardeni, "La Vision des Juifs et du Judaïsme dans l'oeuvre de Pierre Bayle," in M. Yardeni (ed.) *Les Juifs dans l'histoire de France,* Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980, 86–95.
48 See R. H. Popkin, "Image of the Jews in Clandestine Literature circa 1700," in G. Canziani (ed.) *Filosofia e religione nella letteratura clandestina secolo XV11 e XV11I,* Milan: Franco Angeli, 1994, 13–34. The term is Popkin's.
49 See M. Yardeni, "Pierre Bayle et les Juifs," 117–27.
50 "L'athée pauvre et violent, sur l'impunité, sera un sot s'il ne vous assassine pas pour voler votre argent. Dès lors tous les liens de la société sont rompus, tous les crimes secrets inondent la terre, comme les sauterelles. A peine d'abord aperçues, viennent ravager les campagnes; le bas peuple ne sera qu'une horde de brigands, comme nos voleurs, dont on ne pend pas la dixième partie à nos sessions; ils passent leur misérable vie dans des tavernes avec les filles perdues, ils les battent, ils se battent entre eux; . . . ils recommencent chaque jour ce cercle abominable de brutalités.
Oui, mes amis, l'athéisme et le fanatisme sont les deux poles d'un univers de confusion et d'horreur. La petite zone de la vertu est entre ces deux poles: marchez d'un pas ferme dans ce sentier; croyez un Dieu bon, et soyez bons. C'est tout ce que les grands législateurs Locke et Penn demandent à leurs peuples." Voltaire, *Histoire de Jenni, ou l'Athée et le Sage, par M. Sherloc; traduit par M. de la Caille,* J. H. Brumfitt and M. I. G. Davis (eds.) Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970, p. 109.
51 *The Confessions*, J. M. Cohen (trans.), Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985, Book 9, p. 393.

## 3 Voltaire's Jews among the world's peoples and nations

1 J. R. Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages. The Beginnings of Modern Jewish Culture in France, 1650–1860*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004, pp. 14–15.
2 Ibid., p. 85.
3 Ibid., pp. 84–85, 199.
4 A. Hertzberg, *Being Jewish in America: The Modern Experience,* New York: Schocken Books, 1979, pp. 20–22.
5 A. Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews. The Origins of Modern Anti-Semitism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1968, p. 313.
6 An interesting parallel may be found in the attitudes towards Jews in eighteenth-century England. There, too, it was less any systematic attempt to anthropologize them, than the assumption that Jews were resented for their unassimilability, as, in the case of the Duke of Bedford, who believed that blacks could be if they intermarried and adopted Christianity. Of Jews, he declared that "for their latest posterity while they continue Jews, [they] will continue to be, and will consider themselves as a people quite distinct and separate from the ancient people of this island." Cited in D. Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self. Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004, p. 94. As Wahrman says, Bedford believed that conversion would be the path to assimilation. Thus, for Bedord, as for Voltaire, the key barrier was religion.
7 "Voltaire: 'Man,'" David Williams (ed.) *The Enlightenment* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 191–92. Translated from *OCM*, 19, 373–85.
8 See E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, F. C. A.Koellen and J. Pettegrove (trans.), Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 145–47.
9 See H. Mitchell, "Reclaiming the Self: The Pascal-Rousseau Connection," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1993, vol. 54, 643.

10 *Pensées sur l'administration publique,* quoted in D. Williams (ed. and trans.), *Voltaire. Political Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, section XXIV, p. 217. Kant said of Voltaire, "He inquires and tests nothing at all, but instead doubts without any proof that a cognition is not to be trusted." In *Lectures on Logic,* J. M. Young (trans. and ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 172. Cited in R. A. Mackkreel, "Kant's Responses to Skepticism," in J. van der Zande and R. H. Popkin (eds.) *The Skeptical Tradition around 1800. Skepticism in Philosophy, Science, and Society*, Dordrecht, Boston and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998, p. 104.

11 "Leurs yeux ronds, leur nez épaté, leurs lèvres toujours grosses, leurs oreilles différemment figurées, la laine de leur tête, la mesure même de leur intelligence, mettent entre eux et les autres espèces d'hommes des différences prodigieux."

12 M. Duchet, *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des lumières*, Paris: Flammarion, 1971, p. 231. See, in addition, R. H. Popkin, "The Philosophical Basis of Eighteenth-Century Racism," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 1973, vol. 3, 245–62; P. H. Boulle, "In Defense of Slavery: Eighteenth-Century Opposition to Abolition and the Origins of a Racist Ideology in France," in F. Krantz (ed.) *History from Below: Studies in Popular Protest and Popular Ideology in Honour of George Rudé*, Montreal: Concordia University Press, 1985, 221–41; N. Hudson, "From 'Nation' to 'Race': The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 1996, vol. 29, 247–64; D. B. Davis, *In the Image of God: Religion, Moral Values, and Our Heritage of Slavery,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001, esp. pp. 307–22.

13 See Duchet, *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des lumières*, pp. 249, 253.

14 Ibid., p. 238.

15 See Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Book 10, Ch. 2, pp. 138–39.

16 Quoted in Williams, *Voltaire. Political Writings,* p. 107.

17 Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, p. 220. See also, J. Leigh, *Voltaire: A Sense of History*, Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, *SVEC*, 2004:05, pp. 88–95 for a discussion of how far Voltaire had traveled from abstract and theoretical reason to the study of the individual and the particular as history's contribution to what could be useful to humanity.

18 J. Starobinski, *Blessings in Disguise; Or, the Morality of Evil,* A. Goldhammer (trans.), Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993, p. 117.

19 For a highly useful analysis of the sources Voltaire used, often quite cavalierly, sometimes inaccurately, see J. H. Brumfitt, (ed.) *La Philosophie de l'histoire*. Vol. 59. *The Complete Works of Voltaire*, Geneva, Toronto and Buffalo: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1968.

20 See R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946, p. 113 for this view.

21 *The A B C* in Williams, *Voltaire. Political Writings*, p. 96.

22 C. Spector takes up the problem in "Quelle justice? Quelle rationalité? La Mesure du droit dans '*L'Esprit des lois*," *SVEC*, 2005:05, 219–42.

23 "Laws," from the *Pocket Philosophical Dictionary*, in Williams, *Voltaire. Political Writings*, pp. 13–24. Quote from p. 16.

24 Cf. M. Richter, who concludes, without referring to Voltaire's vision of an emerging European sociability, that he was more concerned about the problems closer to home than in Europe's place on the global scene. See "Competing Concepts and Practices of Comparison in the Political and Social Thought of Eighteenth-Century Europe," *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, 2002, vol. 44, 199–219.

25 The editors of the *Dictionnaire* also tell us that Voltaire's major goal was to reach a wide audience that would not be interested in theologic disputes and would welcome apparently concrete facts (*OC*, 35, 164–65).

26 On the writers Voltaire consulted, see R. Pomeau, *"Ecrasez l'infâme" 1759–1770.* Vol. IV. *Voltaire et son temps,* Oxford: Voltaire Foundation: 1994, pp. 276–77.

27 On Richard Simon, see P. J. Lambe, "Biblical Criticism and Censorship in Ancien Régime France," *Harvard Theological Review,* 1985, vol. 78, 149–77.

28 See J. P. Lee, "Voltaire et Bossuet: Les infortunes de l'éloquence," *SVEC*, 2006:10, 263–69, for Voltaire's gradual and repeated challenges to Bossuet, ending in a repudiation of his claims as a historian, who, in addition to his failure to write true universal history, relied on eloquence to embellish his narrations instead of inspecting social mores.

29 A. Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 234. states that the Jews were given "only a brief mention" in the *Essai sur les moeurs,* but then adds a few instances later, that "a silent Jewish presence nonetheless hovers over much of the text."

30 "Mille révolutions locales ont certainement changé une partie du globe dans le physique et dans le moral, mais nous ne les connaissons pas; et les hommes se sont avisés si d'écrire que le genre humain, tout ancien qu'il est, paraît nouveau pour nous."

31 "[P]resque toute la terre s'est nourrie d'illusion. Il n' y a presque point de people qui ne conservât dans ses archives, ou qui n'est par la tradition orale, quelque prédiction qui l'assurait de la conquête du monde. … Les juifs memes … espérèrent, comme les autres peuples, d'être les maîtres de l'univers, fondés sur mille oracles que nous expliquons dans un sens mystique, et qu'ils entendaint dans le sens littéral." Voltaire, as I argue in Chapter 5, was not as sure-footed in distinguishing the one from the other.

32 "dans nos histoires fabriqués dans notre Occident … [L]a petite nation juive, qui est devenue l'object et le fondement de nos histoires prétendues universelles, dans lesquelles un certain genre d'auteurs, se copiant les uns et les autres, [et] oublie les trois quarts de la terre."

33 "Ce qu'on doit surtout remarquer de l'Egypte et de toutes les nations, c'est qu'elles n'ont jamais eu d'opinions constants, comme elles n'ont jamais eu de lois toujours uniformes, malgré l'attachement que les hommes ont à leurs anciens usages. Il n'y a d'immuable que la géométrie, tout le reste est une variation continuelle."

34 See J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*. Volume I. *The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon, 1737–1764*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 55–57.

35 Ibid., 45–46.

36 Voltaire's italics. He may have been thinking of Anthonie Van Dale, Fontenelle, Christian Thomasius, and Balthasar Bekker, all of whom, like Spinoza before them, questioned demons and magic, as well as tradition and doctrinal authority. See J. I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 378.

37 A. Berlin and M. Z. Brettler, "Psalms: Introduction," in A. Berlin and M. Z. Brettler (eds.) *The Jewish Study Bible*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 1282.

38 T. Braun argues, on the basis of modern chaos theory, that events in the long run are not predictable, and that Voltaire's providential determinism should not be taken as a repudiation of free will. Braun, however, pays insufficient attention to Voltaire's horror of randomness and seems to confuse it with contingency. See "Voltaire, Zadig, Candide, and Chaos," *SVEC*, 1997, vol. 358, 1–20.

39 "[P]ourquoi Mahomet et ses successeurs, qui commencèrent leurs conquêtes précisment comme les Juifs, firent-ils de si grandes choses, et les Juifs de si petites? Ne serait-point parce que les musulmans eurent le plus grand soin de soumettre les vaincus à leur religion, tantôt par la force, tantôt par la persuasion?

Les Hébreux, au contraire, associèrent rarement les étrangers à leur culte. Les musulmans arabes incorporènt à eux les autres nations; les Hébreux s'en tirent toujours séparés. Il paraît enfin que les Arabes eurent un enthousiasme plus courageux, une politique plus généreuse et plus hardie. Le people hébreux avait en horreur les autres nations, et craignit toujours d'être asservi; le peuple arabe, au contraire, voulut attirer tout à lui, et se crut fait pour dominer.

Si ces Ismaélites ressemblaient aux Juifs par l'enthousiasme et la soif du pillage, ils étaient prodigieusement supérieurs par le courage, par la grandeur d'âme, par la magnanimité: leur histoire, ou vraie, ou fabuleuse, avant Mahomet, est remplie d'exemples d'amitié tels que la Grèce en inventa dans les fables de Pylade et d'Oreste, de Thésée et de Pirithoüs. L'histoire des Barmécides n'est qu'une suite de génerosités inouïes qui élèvent l'âme. Ces traits caractèrisent une nation. On ne voit, au contraire, dans toutes les annales du peuple hébreu, aucune action généreuse. Ils ne connaissent ni l'hospitalité, ni la libéralité, ni la clémence. Leur souverain bonheur est d'exercer l'usure avec les étrangers; et cet esprit d'usure, principe de toute lâcheté, est tellement enraciné dans leurs coeurs, que c'est l'object continuel des figures qu'ils emploient dans l'espèce d'éloquence qui leur est propre. Leur gloire est de mettre à feu et à sang les petits villages dont ils peuvent s'emparer. Ils égorgent les vieillards et les enfants; ils ne réservent que les filles nubiles; ils assassinent leurs maîtres quand ils sont esclaves; ils ne savent jamais pardonner quand ils sont vainqueurs; ils sont les ennemis du genre humain. Nulle politesse, nulle science, nul art perfectionné dans aucun temps chez cette nation atroce. Mais, dès le second siècle de l'hégire, les Arabes deviennent les précepteurs de l'Europe dans les sciences et dans les arts, malgré leur loi qui semble l'ennemi des arts."

40 "tous les Juifs qu'on rencontrerait. Il y en avait beaucoup sur les frontières de France; tout le commerce était entre leurs mains. Les chrétiens, croyant venger Dieu, firent main basse sur tous ces malheureux. Il n'y eut jamais, depuis Adrien, un si grand massacre de cette nation; ils furent égorgés à Verdun, à Spire, à Worms, à Cologne, à Mayence; et plusieurs se tuèrent eux-mêmes. après avoir fendu le ventre à leurs femmes, pour ne pas tomber entre les mains de ces barbares."

41 Max Weber says of this "Hinduist" merchant caste, who were called "the Jews of India," that they "were, in part, virtuosos in unscrupulous profiteering." H.H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (eds.and trans.) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1946, p. 413. As a group that was, because of their religion, socially set apart, and could not be said to belong to any class, Jews were, Max Weber states, identified with a form of pariah capitalism, pp. 189–90. A. Momigliano questions Weber's concept of Jews as a "pariah" people, who went into the ghetto of their own choice. Rather they "went on giving laws to themselves and treated their pact with God as their own legal title to the future recovery of their own land in the messianic age." See S. Berti (ed.) and M. Masella-Gayley (trans.) *Essays on Ancient and Modern Judaism*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 176.

42 "Philosophie des Juifs," *Encyclopédie,* vol. 9, 37–51.

43 "[C]'est la suite inévitable de leur législation; il fallait, ou qu'ils subjuguassent tout, ou qu'ils fussent écrasés. Il leur fut ordonné d'avoir les nations en horreur. . . . Quand leurs yeux furent un peu ouverts par d'autres nations victorieuses, qui leur apprirent que le monde était plus grand qu'ils ne croyaient, ils se trouvèrent, par leur loi même, ennemis naturels de ces nations, et enfin du genre humain. . . . Ils gardèrent tous leus usages, qui sont précisement le contraire des usages sociables; ils furent donc avec raison traité comme une nation opposée en tout aux autres, les servant par avarice, les détestant par fanatisme, se faisant de l'usure un devoir sacré. Et ce sont nos pères."

44 "Il arrivera peut-être aux Juifs la même catastrophe: quand la société des hommes sera perfectionnée, quand chaque people fera le commerce par lui-même et ne partagera plus les fruits de son travail avec ces courtiers errants, alors le nombre des Juifs diminuera nécessairement. Les riches commencent parmi eux à mépriser leurs superstitions; elles ne seront plus que le partage d'un peuple sans arts and sans lois, qui, ne trouvant plus à s'enricher par notre négligence, ne pourra plus faire une société séparée, et qui, n'entendant plus son ancien jargon corrompu, mêlé d'hébraïque et de syriaque, ignorant alors jusqu'à ses livres, se confondra avec la lie des autres peuples."
45 See, for this view, L. Strauss, "Why We Remain Jews," in K. H. Green (ed.) *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity*, Albany: State University of New York Press 1997, pp. 318–19.
46 In his belief that Christianity was coming apart and that Europe was entering an age of nihilism, Nietzsche famously deplored, as if echoing Voltaire, the way in which Judaism's slavishness subjected its believers to a "supremely powerful" and harsh God, though his nihilism would surely have dismayed the Frenchman. Notions of sin and repentance, Nietzsche declared admiringly, were foreign to the Greeks. He praised them for their invention of tragedy. Sin was a Jewish invention and the source of all Christian morality. He nevertheless celebrated Jews for their "poetic talent and inclination towards the sublime." See Friedrich Nietzsche, Aphorism 135, in B. Williams (ed.) *The Gay Science*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 124–25. In *On the Genealogy of Morals,* W. Kaufmann, (trans.), New York: Vintage Books, 1967, First Essay, Sections 7–10, pp. 33–39, Nietzsche writes about the replacement of aristocratic by Jewish values, and in Section 16, pp. 53–54, he notes that, with the Reformation, and more so, with the French Revolution, Jewish *ressentiment* registered its triumph over classical Roman aristocratic values. For him, the Jews were "the priestly nation … in whom there dwelt an unequaled popular-moral genius."

## 4 Voltaire's Jews in the world of commerce and their capacity for critical thought and social inclusion

1 Voltaire's numbers are not far off the mark. According to H. P. H. Nusteling, "The Jews in the Republic of the United Provinces: Origin, Numbers and Dispersion," in J. I. Israel and R. Salverda, (eds.) *Dutch Jewry: Its History and Secular Culture*, Leiden: Brill, 2002, 55–56, the total Jewish population in the United Provinces was close to 11,500 in 1700, with about 8000 Jews living in Amsterdam.
2 Isaac de Pinto, *An Essay on Circulation and Credit in Four Parts and a Letter Upon the Jealousy of Commerce*, S. Baggs (trans.), London: J. Ridley, 1774, p. 167.
3 D. Vital, *A People Apart. The Jews in Europe 1789–1939*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 52
4 P. Aubery thinks otherwise. See "Voltaire and Anti-Semitism: A Reply to Hertzberg," *SVEC*, 1983, vol. 217, 180–81.
5 François Joseph Antoine Hell, *Observations d'un Alsacien sur l'affaire présente des Juifs d'Alsace*, Frankfurt, 1779.
6 See S. Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, C. Naor (trans.), Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002, pp. 122–25
7 Voltaire, *Commentaire sur l'Esprit des lois*, Lausanne, Neuchâtel, Geneva, 1778, cited in C. Larrère, "Montesquieu économiste? Une lecture paradoxale," *SVEC*, 2005: 05, 244–45.
8 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, A. Cohler, B. Miller and H. Stone (eds.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, Book 21, Ch. 20, p. 388.

A. Hertzberg finds no redeeming qualities in Montesquieu's opinion of the Jews. See *The French Enlightenment and the Jews. The Origins of Modern Anti-Semitism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1968, pp. 274–76. In the *Persian Letters*, C. J. Betts (trans.), Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973, Letter 60, p. 125. Usbek casts his skeptical eye on Judaism, Islam and Christianity, speaks of the folly of the Jewish expulsions from Spain, and states magisterially that "the zeal for the advancement of a religion is different from the attachment one should have for it."

9 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Book 22, Ch. 19, p. 420.

10 Ibid., Book 21, Ch. 20, p. 389.

11 De Pinto, *An Essay on Circulation and Credit*, p. 175. "In the chapter of Benedictions," de Pinto explained, "the text says, *Thou shalt lend to divers nations, and thou shalt not borrow.* In the chapter of Curses, the text says, *Thou shalt borrow of divers nations, and thou shalt not lend*; without one word of usury or interest. I could not avoid taking notice of so gross a mistake. It is true, however, that among the Jews the rich are forbidden from taking interest of the poor; but Moses does not extend the prohibition to people of fortune among one another. . . . Moses permits the Jews to take interest of strangers; but it is absurd to say, that usury was ever commanded. *Lanochry tassig*. *Tassig* comes from *nessig*, and can only signify Legal Interest, which they were permitted to take from strangers. Tarbit signifies Augmentation, or Usury, which God never commanded his people to exact. A reproach of this kind is blasphemy in the mouth of a Christian, and folly in the mind of a philosopher." Emphasis his.

12 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Book 20, Ch. 1, p. 338.

13 "The ABC," in D. Williams (ed.) *Voltaire. The Political Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 158.

14 "Dialogue Between a Philosopher and a Comptroller-General of Finance," ibid., p. 284.

15 Ibid., p. 285.

16 De Pinto, *Essay on Circulation and Credit*. De Pinto's praise of Dutch and English commerce and England's political institutions is at the center of his study.

17 "Dialogue Between a Philosopher and a Comptroller-General of France," in Williams, (ed.) *Voltaire. The Political Writings*, pp. 281–82.

18 I. Hont, The *Jealousy of Trade. International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005, p. 28.

19 Voltaire and Frederick II of Prussia, *The Refutation of Machiavelli's Prince or Anti-Machiavel*, P. Sonnino (trans.), Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1981, pp. 103–4.

20 De Pinto, *Essay on Circulation*, pp. 28–29. Elsewhere, de Pinto seems to reverse himself, supporting a society in which the "inferior ranks," should constitute the most numerous part, and form the foundation of a social and economic pyramid, with the sovereign power at its summit, p. 215.

21 "Etre bon patriote, c'est souhaiter que sa ville s'enrichisse par le commerce, et soit puissante par les armes. Il est clair qu'un pays ne peut gagner sans qu'un autre perdre, sans faire des malheureux. Telle est donc la condition humaine, que souhaiter la grandeur de son pays c'est souhaiter du mal à ses voisins. Celui qui voudrait que sa patrie ne fût jamais ni plus grande, ni plus petite, ni plus riche, ni plus pauvre, serait le citoyen de l'univers."

22 For the notion that Voltaire's economic views were incoherent, see B. E. Schwarzbach, "Voltaire et les Juifs: bilan et plaidoyer," *SVEC*, 1997, vol. 358, 62. E. J. Hundert recognizes the importance for Voltaire of *luxe* as an indispensable aspect of economic growth, which he borrowed indirectly from

Mandeville via the writings of Jean-François Melon and Montesquieu. See *The Enlightenment's Fable. Bernard Mandeville and the Discovery of Society* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 204–5. For more biographic details on de Pinto, see R. H. Popkin, "Isaac de Pinto's Criticism of Mandeville and Hume on Luxury," *SVEC*, 1976, vol. 154, 1705–14, including references to his loan of over £6,000,000 to the British government in 1761 and his friendship with David Hume.

23 See F. Manuel, *The Broken Staff: Judaism through Christian Eyes*, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 217.

24 See, *inter alia*, R. Menkis, "Patriarchs and Patricians: The Gradis Family of Eighteenth-Century Bordeaux," in F. Malino and D. Sorkin (eds.) *From East and West: Jews in a Changing Europe, 1750–1870*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, 11–45; G. Nahon, "Séfarades et Ashknases en France: La conquête de l'Emancipation (1789-1791)," in M. Yardeni (ed.) *Les Juifs dans l'histoire de France*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990, 121–45; J. Cavaignac, "A Bordeaux et Bayonne. Des 'marchands portugais' aux citoyens français" in B. Blumenkranz (ed.) *Juifs en France au xviiie siècle*, Paris: Commission des Archives Juives: 1994, 53–72.

25 J. I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism 1550–1750*, London and Portland: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1998, p. ix.

26 See D. Sorkin, "The Port Jew: Notes Toward a Social Type," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 1999, vol. 50, 87–97 and the collection of essays, in D. Cesarini (ed.) *Port Jews. Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550–1950*, London and Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass, 2002. See also, S. W. Baron's earlier study, "Modern Capitalism and Jewish Fate," in *History and Jewish Historians: Essays and Addresses*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964, pp. 41–55.

27 F. A. Kafker and S. L. Kafker, *The Encyclopedists as Individuals: A Biographical Dictionary of the Authors of the Encyclopédie*," *SVEC*, 1988, vol. 257, p. 177, credit Jaucourt with the authorship of between one-quarter and one-half of the articles in volumes 8 to 15 of the *Encyclopédie*. In a later study, F. A. Kafker revises the volume numbers from 8 to 15 to 8 to 17. See *The Encyclopedists as a Group: A Collective Biography of the Authors of the Encyclopédie*, *SVEC*, 1996, vol. 345, p. 120.

28 J. I. Israel, *Diasporas Within a Diaspora. Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World Maritime Empires (1540–1740)*, Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 2002, p. 39.

29 "Ainsi répandus de nos jours avec plus de sûreté qu'ils n'en avoient encore eu dans tous les pays de l'Europe où règne le commerce, ils sont devenus des instrumens par le moyen desquels les nations les plus éloignées peuvent converser et correspondre ensemble. Il en est d'eux, comme des chevilles et des cloux qu'on employe dans un grande édifice, et qui sont nécessaries pour en joindre toutes les parties. On s'est fort mal trouvé en Espagne de les avoir chassés, ainsi qu'en France d'avoir persécuté des sujets dont la croyance différoit en quelques points de celle du prince. L'amour de la religion chrétienne consiste dans sa pratique; et cette pratique ne respire que douceur, qu'humanité, que charité." "Juif," *Encyclopédie*, vol. 9, 24–25.

30 "Usure," *Encyclopédie*, vol. 17, 542–45.

31 "Intérêt," *Encyclopédie*, vol. 8, 823, 826–27.

32 "Finance," *Encyclopédie*, vol. 5, 811–15.

33 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Book 22, Ch. 10, pp. 411–12; Book 22, Ch. 16, pp. 417–18.

34 "Luxe," *Encyclopédie*, vol. 9, 763–71.

35 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Book 3, Ch. 3, pp. 22–23.

36 Ibid., Book 20, Ch. 2, pp. 338–39.

37 Ibid., Book 9, Ch. 1, pp. 131–32.

38 Ibid., Book 20, Ch. 23, p. 353.
39 Ibid., Book 20, Ch 4, p. 340, where Montesquieu speaks of virtue in a republic as its leading principle.
40 Larrère, "Montesquieu économiste? Une lecture paradoxale," p. 265.
41 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Book 5, Ch. 4, p. 44.
42 Voltaire, "Thoughts on Public Administration," in Williams (ed.) *Voltaire. The Political Writings*, p. 222.
43 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Book 2, Ch. 4, p. 19. See M. Sonenscher. *Before the Deluge. Public Debt, Inequality, and the Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007, pp. 116–20, for a discussion of Montesquieu's analysis of the Law system.
44 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Book 15, Ch. 1, p. 246.
45 Voltaire, "On Commerce," *Philosophical Letters*, E. Dilworth (ed. and trans.), Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1961, pp. 39–40. Cf. Voltaire, "Tolérance," *OC*, 36, 553.
46 "Courtiers," *Encyclopédie*, vol. 4, 399.
47 Voltaire, "On the Presbyterians," *Philosophical Letters*, p. 26.
48 E. Auerbach, *Mimesis. The Representations of Reality in Western Literature*, W. R. Trask (trans.), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, pp. 404, 407, 20.
49 *Ibid.*, pp. 411, 413.
50 See Hont, *The Jealousy of Trade*, p. 76, note 153.
51 Adolphe Thiéry, *Dissertation sur cette question: Est-il des moyens de rendre les Juifs plus heureux et plus utiles en France?*, Paris: Knapen Fils et Mme. La Veuve Delaguette et Fils, 1788. Reprint. Paris: EdHis, 1968.
52 Philippe-François de Latour-Foissac, *Le cri du citoyen contre les Juifs de Metz. Par un capitaine d'infanterie*, Lausanne [Metz], 1786.
53 Honoré-Gabriel Riqueti, comte de Mirabeau, *Sur Moses Mendelssohn, sur la réforme politique des Juifs: Et en particulier sur la révolution tentée en leur faveur en 1753 dans la Grande Bretagne*, London, 1787. Reprint. Paris: EdHis, 1968.
54 Abbé Henri Grégoire, *Essai sur la régénération physique, morale et politique des Juifs* Paris, 1789, Reprint. Paris: EdHis, 1968. On the obsession with a specific Jewish disease etiology, see H. Mitchell and S. S. Kottek, "An Eighteenth-Century Medical View of the Diseases of the Jews in Northeastern France: Medical Anthropology and the Politics of Jewish Emancipation," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 1993, vol. 67, 248–81.
55 *Lettre du Sr I.B.B. Juif de Metz, à l'auteur anonyme d'un écrit intitulé: Le cri du citoyen contre les Juifs*, Metz: Jean-Baptiste Collignon, 1787.
56 See Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, *Concerning the Amelioration of the Civil Status of the Jews*, H. Lederer (trans.), Cincinnati, Ohio: Hebrew Union College Institute of Religion, 1957, pp. 16, 61, 69.
57 *Moses Mendelssohn, Jerusalem and Other Jewish Writings*, A. Jospe (ed. and trans.), New York: Schocken Books, 1969, pp. 73–75. For a recent study of Mendelssohn, see D. Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Religion of Enlightenment*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996.
58 "Philosophie des juifs," *Encyclopédie*, vol. 9, 37–51.
59 Isaac de Pinto, *Apologie pour la nation juive: Réflexions critiques sur le premier chapitre de VIIe tome des oeuvres de M. Voltaire*, P. Lafanu (trans.), Amsterdam, 1762.
60 "Je vous dirai avec la même franchise, que bien des gens ne peuvent souffrir ni vos lois, vos livres, ni vos superstitions; ils disent que votre nation fait de tout temps beaucoup de mal à elle-même, et en a fait au genre humain. Si vous êtes philosophe, comme vous paraissez l'être, vous pensez comme ces messieurs, mais vous ne le direz pas. La superstition est le plus abominable fléau de la terre; c'est elle qui vous envoie encore au bûcher chez des peoples d'ailleurs estimables. Il y a des aspects sous lesquels la nature humain est la nature infernale.

On sècherait d'horreur si on la regardait toujours par ces côtés. Mais les honnêtes gens en passant par la Grève où l'on roue, ordonnent à leur cocher d'aller vite, et vont se distraire à l'opéra du spectacle affreux qu'ils ont vu sur leur chemin.
"Je pourrais disputer avec vous sur les sciences que vous attribuez aux anciens Juifs, et vous montrer qu'ils n'en savaient pas plus que les Français du temps de Chilpéric; je pourrais vous fair convenir que le jargon d'une petite province, mêlé de caldéen, de phénicien et d'arabe, était une langue aussi indigente et aussi rude que notre ancien gaulois, mais je vous fâcherais peut-être, et vous me paraissez trop gallant homme pour que je veuille vous déplaire. Restez juif, puisque vous l'êtes, vous n'égorgez point quarante deux mille hommes pour n'avoir pas bien prononcé shibboleth, ni vingt quatre mille pour avoir couché avec des Madianites; mais soyez philosophe, c'est tout ce que je peux vous souhaiter de mieux dans cette courte vie." In *La Philosophie de l'histoire*, *OCM*, 11, 102–3, Voltaire refers to 32,000 Midianite virgins, only 32 of whom, he says, were massacred. At the same time, he asks his readers to concede that in antiquity God had perhaps chosen the Jews to exterminate their enemies. This may perhaps be taken as a piece of irony, but the reference to the fate of the Midianties women in his letter to de Pinto may be more credibly seen as another opportunity to remind him of a shameful heritage.

61 I agree with A. Sutcliffe's comments on this exchange. See A. Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 245. Also see his article, "Can a Jew Be a Philosophe? Isaac de Pinto, Voltaire, and Jewish Participation in the European Enlightenment," *Jewish Social Studies*, 2000, vol. 6, no. 3, 31–51.

62 See B. S. Gregory, *Introduction to TTP*, p. 37.

63 Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem and Other Jewish Writings*, p. 61.

64 See P. Benhamou, "Antiphilosophes éclairés et les Juifs," in I. Y. Zinguer and S. W. Bloom (eds.) *L'Antisémitisme éclairé. Iinclusion et exclusion depuis l'Epoque des Lumières jusqu'à l'affaire Dreyfus*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003, 61–75.

65 Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem and Other Writings*, p. 41.

66 Ibid., p.103. On Mendelssohn's pessimistic conclusion that the Enlightenment was not succeeding in eradicating prejudice in the German-speaking lands, see S. Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, C. Naor (trans.), Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002, pp. 166–72.

67 Ibid., 365–73.

68 De Pinto, *Letter upon the Jealousy of Commerce*, p. 229.

69 On Hourwitz, see F. Malino, *A Jew in the French Revolution. The Life of Zalkind Hourwitz*, Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996.

70 See G. Kates, "Jews into Frenchmen," in F. Fehér (ed.) *The French Revolution and the Birth of Modernity*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1990, 103–16. That they were not seen as a unified and coherent "nation," but rather as an aggregate of divided nations is suggested by P. Girard, *La Révolution et les Juifs*, Paris: Robert Lafont, 1989, p. 47.

71 See J. Goy, "Civil Code," in F. Furet and M.Ozouf, (eds.) and A. Goldhammer (trans.), *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989, pp. 437–48. Quotation from p. 447.

## 5 Voltaire's reading of the Old Testament

1 See *inter alia*, I. O. Wade, *Voltaire and Mme Du Chatelet; An Essay on the Intellectual Activity at Cirey*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941; studies by A. Ages, "Voltaire's Biblical Criticism: A Study in Thematic Repeti-

tions," *SVEC*, 1964, vol. 30, 205–21; "Voltaire, the Marchioness of Deffand and Ecclesiastes," *Romance Notes*, 1966 vol. 8, 51–54; "Voltaire, Calmet and the Old Testament," *SVEC*, 1966, vol. 41, 87–187; "Voltaire and the Old Testament: The Testament of his Correspondence," *SVEC*, 1967, vol. 50, 43–63; B. E. Schwarzbach, *Voltaire's Old Testament Criticism*, Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1971, deals learnedly with the organizing principles of the Old Testament; D. Levy, *Voltaire et son exégèse du Pentateuque: critique et polémique*, *SVEC*, 1975, vol. 130; R. Mortier, "Les philosophes français du 18e siècle devant le judaïsme et la judéité," in *Juifs en France au xviiie siècle*, *sous la direction de B. Blumenkrantz*, Commision française des archives juives, 1994, 197–211; F. Bessire, "Voltaire lecteur de dom Calmet," *SVEC*, 1991, vol. 284, 139–71 and *La Bible dans la correspondance de Voltaire*, Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1999.

2 Y. H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor. Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1982, pp. 73–74. Citation from p. 81. See also, B. E. Schwarzbach, "Receptiveness to an Idea: A Search for Relatively Positive Representations of the Jew in Enlightenment France," *The European Legacy*, 2000, vol. 5, 12–13, 16–18.

3 See J. M. Elukin, "Jacques Basnage and the History of the Jews: Anti-Catholic Polemic and Historical Allegory in the Republic of Letters," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1992, vol. 53, 603–30. A. Sutcliffe is, however, not convinced that Elukin succeeds in drawing an analogy between Catholicism and rabbinic Judaism. See his *Judaism and Enlightenment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 85. Sutcliffe has high praise for Basnage's scholarship and respect for his sources, but he also argues that he was not prepared to wander too far from the traditional Christian view that divine punishment of the Jews was justified.

4 J. I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 537–38.

5 N. L. Torrey, "Boulainvilliers: the Man and the Mask," *SVEC*, 1955, vol. 1, 159–73.

6 Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 569–70.

7 See S. Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983, pp. 62–63.

8 For the history of the *Imposteurs*, see Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 694–700.

9 *Lettres sur Rabelais, et sur d'autres accusés d'avoir mal parlé de la religion chrétienne*, cited in C. Porset, "Notes sur Voltaire et Spinoza," in O. Bloch (ed.) *Spinoza au XVII siècle*, Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1990, 231.

10 N. L. Torrey, "Voltaire's Reaction to Diderot," *PMLA*, 1935, vol. 50, 1107–40.

11 P. Hazard, "Voltaire et Spinoza," *Modern Philology*, 1940–41, vol. 38, 35–64. In his last but one footnote, Hazard refers to Lovejoy's conclusion that Voltaire and Spinoza were intellectually incompatible. See, in addition, A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, New York: Harper and Row, 1936, p. 210. See especially, I. O. Wade, *The Clandestine Organization and Diffusion of Philosophic Ideas in France from 1700 to 1750*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1938.

12 R. H. Popkin, "Jewish Anti-Christian Arguments as a Source of Irreligion from the Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century," in M. Hunter and D.Wootton (eds.) *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, 159–81, citation on p. 180. On Morteira, see Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, p. 615.

13 R. H. Popkin, "Images of the Jew in Clandestine Literature circa 1700," in G. Canziani (ed.) *Filosofia e religion nella letteratura clandestina. Secoli XVII e XVIII*, Milan: Franco Angeli, 1994, 13–34.

14 See, for example, S. A. Geller, "The Religion of the Bible," in A. Berlin and M. Z. Brettler (eds.) *The Jewish Study Bible*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 2039.

15 See N. Senior, "Voltaire and the Book of Job," *The French Review*, 1973, vol. 47, 340-7 for a perceptive reading of Voltaire's lack of empathy for the book's larger meanings.
16 *Questions on the Encyclopedia* in D. Williams, (ed.) *Voltaire. The Political Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.pp. 49–50.
17 *The ABC*, in ibid., pp. 128–29.
18 Ibid., p. 129.
19 See M. Hadas-Lebel, "La Lecture de Flavius Josèphe aux xviie et xviiie siècles," in C. Grell and F. Laplanche (eds.) *La République des lettres et l'histoire du judäisme antique*, Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1992, 101–13. In an earlier, briefer study, Hadas-Lebel points out that Voltaire did esteem Flavius for passing over in silence the primitive Christian stories, such as the massacre of the innocents and the stars that guided the shepherds, "Voltaire Lecteur de Flavius Josephus," *Revue des Etudes Juives*, 1991,vol. 150, 530–34.
20 See A. Momigliano, *Essays on Ancient and Modern Judaism*, S. Berti (ed.) and M. Masella-Gayley (trans.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1994, p. 27.
21 Ibid., pp. 179–81.
22 Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, H. St. J. Thakeray (trans.) in *Works*. Vol. II Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997, (Loeb edn), pp. 353–55.
23 A Momigliano, *Terzo Contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico*, 2 vols., Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1966. Cited in M. I. Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History*, New York: Viking Press, 1975, p. 82. Cf. G. Josipovici, *The Book of God. A Response to the Bible*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988, p. 5: "It (the Bible) is being misread if it is so emphatically placed in its historical and cultural context that any link with our present needs and desires is rigorously denied."
24 P. Vidal-Naquet, *The Jews. History, Memory, and the Present*, D. A. Curtis (ed. and trans.), New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, pp. 58–59. See also, F. Schmidt, "Destin et providence chez Flavius Josephus," in F. Hartog, P. Schmitt and A. Schnapp, (eds.) *Pierre Vidal-Naquet, un historien dans la cité*, Paris: Editions La Découverte, 1998, 169–90, for a study of Flavius Josephus' treatment of destiny and providence as seen by the Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes; and in particular whether these questions rested on Greek notions or were to be found in Hebrew Scripture.
25 Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* A. J. Krailsheimer (trans. and introduction), Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965, pp. 104–15. The *Pensées* cited are 252, 257, 259, 260, 261, 264, and 265.
26 In Letter Twenty-Five, "On the *Pensées* of M. Pascal," Voltaire not only challenges Pascal's wager, his "misanthropy," his belief in miracles, his aesthetic sense as was seen in his "quaint" notions about poetry's goals, and his being so bold as to question Providence. He also questions Pascal's thoughts on the Jews of the Old Testament, especially his typology, with these words, "The Jews have always been waiting for a liberator; but their liberator is for them and not for us. They await a Messiah who will give the Jews mastery over the Christians; and we hope that the Messiah will one day unite the Jews with the Christians. On this matter they think precisely the contrary of what we do." Voltaire takes the side of Christians in the polemic, but takes care to say that his admiration of Jesus Christ lies outside church doctrine. See Voltaire, *Philosophical Letters*, E. D. Dilworth (trans. and introduction), Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1961, 118–45. See Chapter 6 for de Bonald's view that the Jews intended to exercise their power over Christians.
27 Pascal, *Pensée* 826, in *Pensées*, p. 277.
28 R. H. Popkin, "Spinoza and Bible Scholarship," in D. Garrett (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996,

does not mean, as I read him, that Spinoza offered a literal reading of the Bible. Popkin writes that Spinoza's "literalism and the contextualization led to a completely secular reading of the Bible. For Spinoza, one had to examine and study the language of the Biblical authors: the way the language was used, the circumstances under which the books were written, including the intentions of the authors." Citation from 396–97. Spinoza's literalism cannot be thought of as resembling Voltaire's *modus operandi*. Voltaire scanted Biblical language and hardly bothered to delve into the intentions of its authors.

29 See L. Gossman, *Between History and Literature*, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1990, pp. 233–35, 243.

30 Robert Lowth's *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, London: J. Johnson, 1787, were first presented in a series of lectures in 1741 inaugurating his professorship at Oxford, and were published in 1753 and again in 1764. The best work on Lowth is by B. Hepworth, *Robert Lowth*, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978. R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd., 1985, pp. 3, 10, 204, thinks that much of the scholarly discussion that followed Lowth's work has unfortunately complicated, rather than amplified, his original insights.

31 See *OC*, 35, 88, in which the editors of the *Dictionnaire philosophique* rightly criticize him for his obtuseness, but do not mention his admiration for the poetry.

32 Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, pp. 2, 306 307, 386.

33 E. Auerbach, *Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, W. R. Trask (trans.), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, pp. 22–23.

34 See Voltaire's review of Lowth in *OCM*, 25, 204–8. Voltaire's praise of the prophets should be contrasted with his hostility and humorous dismissals in the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, (*OC*, 36, 464–68). Voltaire's contempt for prophets may also be seen in his blasts against fanaticism. He contrasts the fanatic with the individual who experiences "ecstasies and has visions, who mistakes his dreams for reality, and his imagination for prophecies" ("Fanatisme," *OC*, 36, 105). He clearly draws on these ancient examples of ecstatic religion to express his disdain for the followers of enthusiastic religion in his own time. But see "Enthousiasme" (*OC*, 36, 58–61), for the view that "reasonable" enthusiasm is a characteristic of great poets.

35 E. S. Christianson and T. McWilliams, "Voltaire's Précis of Ecclesiastes: A Case Study in the Bible's Afterlife," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 2005, vol. 29, 455–84, have used the first Louvre edition of 1759, which, in their view, is more reliable than the Moland version. Christianson infers, if he does not say outright, that Voltaire did his own translations. In fact, he relied on others for the translations, as was noted at the beginning of this Chapter.

36 These are the English translations of the selections in the *Précis* by T. McWilliams, ibid., 478. Comparison with the texts in Ecclesiastes, whether in *The Jewish Bible* or in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, make no allusions to an abyss or the tomb. These are Voltaire's additions.

37 Ibid., 477.

38 The translation in *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1607 is, "To increase learning is to increase heartache."

39 M. Walzer, "The Idea of Holy War in Ancient Israel," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 1992, vol. 20, 21–27. Max Weber, *Ancient Israel*, H. H. Gerth and D. Martindale (trans.), Glencoe: The Free Press, 1952, argues that a notion of international law did in fact regulate warfare between ancient Israel and its neighbors.

40 On the relationship between allegory and midrash (the rabbinic interpretation to extract meanings unbound by plain sense), see D. Stern, "Midrash and Jewish Interpretation," in *The Jewish Study Bible*, esp. pp. 1871–73.

41 R. Alter, *The World of Biblical Literature*, New York: Basic Books, 1992, pp. 90, 96, 101, 106. See, as well, Northrop Frye's inspired earlier study, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, Toronto: Academic Press Canada, 1982. A brief analysis of some of these questions is to be found in A.-M. Pelletier, "Voltaire et la Bible à propos de quelques récits fameux," *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, 1996, vol. 70, 195–211.

42 R. Alter, *Canon and Creativity: Modern Writing and the Authority of Scripture.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000, pp. 5, 17–20.

43 See J. Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible. Translation, Scholarship, Culture*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005, pp. xi, 170.

44 B. E. Schwarzbach, "Samuel Cahen's Bible Commentary," in I. Y. Zinguer and S. W. Bloom (eds.) *L'Antisemitisme éclairé. Inclusion et exclusion depuis l'Epoque des Lumières jusqu'à l'affaire Dreyfus*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003, p. 201.

45 Maimonides. *Guide of the Perplexed*, S. Pines (trans.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963, Vol. II, pp. xxv, 327–28.

46 E. Breuer, "Post-Medieval Jewish Interpretation," and T. Samuelson, "The Bible in the Jewish Philosophical Tradition," both in *The Jewish Study Bible*. pp. 1901, 1964. T. Verbeek, *Spinoza's Theologico-Political Treatise*, Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2003, is an invaluable guide to these questions. He notes (p. 116) that Spinoza suppressed Maimonides' precise description for interpreting certain passages.

47 C. Ozick, *Art and Ardor*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983, pp. 194–95.

48 Richard Simon, *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament*, Rotterdam, 1685, 1. Cited in Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*, p. 44.

49 Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 16.

50 Ibid., pp.15–16.

51 According to P. J. Lambe, Simon did not have a clear concept of the methods or the goals of critique, only an attitude towards the texts. But can the attitude be separated from the method? Simon's attitude, as Lambe points out, seriously disturbed Bossuet who found that, by elevating individual judgment and setting aside patristic dogma, Simon was encouraging skepticism and undermining theologic authority. "Biblical Criticism and Censorship in Ancien Régime France: The Case of Richard Simon," *Harvard Theological Review*, 1985, vol. 78, 149–77.

52 R. Koselleck, *Futures Past. On the Semantics of Historical Time*, K. Tribe (trans.), Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1985, p. 134.

53 See M. Walzer, M. Lorberbaum and N. J. Zohar (eds.) *The Jewish Political Tradition.* Vol. II. *Membership*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003, pp. 16–80, 314–20.

54 See J. Miles, *God A Biography*, New York: Vintage Books, 1996, *passim*.

55 Cf. R. Pomeau: "Il est certain, que Voltaire ne fait pas le moindre effort pour comprendre l'esprit religion des anciens Juifs, qui expliquerait (à défaut de le justifier) ce qui nous paraît si choquant." "*Ecraser l'infâme 1759–1770*," Vol. IV. *Voltaire en son temps*, Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1994, p. 280. Similarly, M.-H. Cotoni, "Les Personnages bibliques dans le *Dictionnaire Philosophique* de Voltaire," *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 1995, vol. 95, 151–64, also notes Voltaire's religious tone deafness.

56 B. M. Metzger and R. E. Murphy (eds.) *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. xxxvi.

57 "Jerusalem and Athens. Some Preliminary Reflections," in L. Strauss, *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, pp. 150–51.

58 S. A. Geller, "The Religion of the Bible," in *The Jewish Study Bible*, 2028.

59 See A. Momigliano, "Time in Ancient Historiography," in *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977, 194–95.

60 I. Berlin refers to what he calls Voltaire's lack of "historical-mindedness" in "The Origins of Cultural History," a lecture he delivered at Princeton in 1973. See The Isaiah Berlin Virtual Library. Posted online, 24 November 2005.

61 For a recent treatment of the cosmopolitan ideal, see K. A. Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, New York: W. W. Norton, 2006. His book is not entirely satisfactory, because of the exclusive links he makes between cosmopolitanism, universalism and liberal values, ignoring the fact that non-liberals, such as Aristotle and Aquinas, also believed in universal values but were, as cosmopolitans, more interested in peace rather than rights, the defense of which are paramount in the liberal credo.

62 Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book II, Ch. 7, in R. D. Masters and C. Kelly (eds.) *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. IV. Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1994, p. 155. In a few paragraphs devoted to Rousseau and the Old Testament, M.-H. Cotoni refers to passages in the *Confessions*, *Emile*, the *Essay on the Origin of Language* to show Rousseau's positive appreciation of the Jews in "Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot," in Y. Belavel and D. Bourel (eds.) *Le Siècle des Lumières et la Bible*, Paris: Beauchesne, 1986, 788–90.

63 R. D. Masters and C. Kelly, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*. Vol. II. *Political Fragments*, quotations from pp. 34–35.

64 Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book II, Ch. 7, p. 157. It is not clear whether these views were first expressed in a document housed in the Neuchâtel Public Library, *Cahiers de brouillons, notes et extraits, no. 7843*. In any case, portions from them were included in the *Political Fragments* and in the final version of the Social Contract. H. Maccoby, *The Philosophy of the Talmud*, London: Routledge Curzon, 2002, pp. 43–44, thinks, mistakenly, that none of the contents of the documents have ever been published.

65 Rousseau, *Social Contract*, in R. D. Masters and C. Kelly, Book II, Ch. 7, p. 157.

66 Ibid., Book IV, Ch. 8, p. 223.

67 Ibid., p. 222.

68 Ibid., p. 217. Cf. R. Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews. Representations of Jews in France, 1715–1815*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2003, pp. 55–56, who argues that Rousseau was unable to resolve the paradox of Jewish separateness—what I term particularism—and the demands of the sovereign general will.

69 Rousseau, *Social Contract*, First Version (Geneva Manuscript), Book I, Ch. 2. in R. D. Masters and C. Kelly, p. 78.

70 Ibid., p. 81.

71 See W. E. Rex, *The Attraction of the Contrary. Essays on the Literature of the French Enlightenment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 94–107, for his view that Rousseau wrenched himself away only with difficulty, trailing contradictions behind him, from the attractions of civilization

72 Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, in *The Essential Rousseau*, New York: Mentor, 1974, p. 186.

73 J. N. Shklar, *Men and Citizens. A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969, pp. 199, 201.

74 Rousseau, *The Government of Poland*, W. Kendall (trans.), Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett, 1985, pp. 11–12.

75 Some of these questions are interestingly explored by G. Cavallar, "'La société générale du genre humain': Rousseau on Cosmopolitanism, International Relations, and Republican Patriotism," *SVEC*, 2003: 09, 89–109.

## 6 French Judaism reinvented and the Enlightenment disputed

1 M. Walzer, *On Toleration*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.
2 See Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment,' in H.S. Reiss (ed.) *Kant*, *Political Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 58. The exact wording is: "If it is now asked whether we at present live in an *enlightened* age, the answer is: No, but we do live in an age of *enlightenment*. As things are at present, we still have a long way to go before men as a whole can be in a position (or can even be put into a position) of using their understanding confidently and well in religious matters, without outside guidance." The emphasis is Kant's.
3 See R. Pomeau, "Faut-il encore lire Voltaire?" and H. T. Mason, "Postface," *SVEC*, 1994, vol. 320, 1–9 and 311–18.
4 That there is virtually an uninterrupted linkage between Christian and modern secular anti-Semitism, resting on a collection of anti-Jewish myths, is the view held by H. Maccoby, in *Antisemitism and Modernity. Innovation and Continuity*, London: Routledge 2006, and, as well, in his earlier works.
5 F. C. Jaher, *The Jews and the Nation: Revolution*, *Emancipation*, *State Formation*, *and the Liberal Paradigm in America and France*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002, Ch. 4. It should be noted that at the present time the French state's relationship with the Jewish community is supervised by the Ministre des Cultes through the *Consistoire Israélite*. The 1905 Law endorsed the *laicité* principle, but there are exceptions, as in Alsace, where the state continues to give support to church-related schools.
6 For what follows, I am indebted to J. R. Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages. The Beginnings of Modern Jewish Culture in France*, *1650–1860*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004, particularly Ch. 9. Consult also A. S. Ferziger, *Exclusion and Hierarchy: Orthodoxy*, *Nonobservance*, *and the Emergence of Modern Jewish Identity*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005. His study deals with the German Jewish community's responses to emancipation and modernity as well.
7 Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages*, pp. 220–21.
8 Ibid., p. 230.
9 M. Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France. From the French Revolution to the Alliance Israélite Universelle*, J. M. Todd (trans.), Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996, pp. 291, 293–95.
10 This section relies on A. Compagnon's essay, "Antisémitisme ou antimodernisme? Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, Bernard Lazare, Léon Bloy," in I. Y. Zinguer and S.W. Bloom (eds.) *L'Antisémitisme éclairé. Inclusion et exclusion depuis l'Epoque des Lumières jusqu'à l'affaire Dreyfus*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003, 423–46.
11 Ibid., p. 436.
12 Emile Zola, "Pour les Juifs," *Le Figaro*, 16 May 1896 in *New English Review*. Online. Available. http://newenglishreview.org/custpage.cfm?frm=4330&sec-id=4330 (accessed 28 November 2006).
13 Bernard Lazare, *Job's Dungheap. Essays on Jewish Nationalism and Social Revolution with a Portrait of Bernard Lazare by Charles Péguy*, H. L. Binsse (trans.), New York: Schocken Books, 1948, cited in H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951, p. 117.
14 See H. Mitchell, *Individual Choice and the Structures of History. Alexis de Tocqueville as Historian Reappraised*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. p. 234.
15 Tocqueville to Madame Swetchine, February 26, 1857, *Oeuvres complètes. Correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Madame Swetchine*, Paris: Gallimard 1983, vol. 15, part 2, 314.

16 Alexis de Tocqueville, "Discours de M. de Tocqueville prononcé dans la séance publique du 21 avril 1842, en venant prendre séance à la place de M. Le Comte de Cessac," *Oeuvres complètes. Mélanges*, Paris: Gallimard, 1989, vol.16, 253. Note a.

17 Tocqueville to Beaumont, April 24, 1856, *Oeuvres complètes. Correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Gustave de Beaumont*, Paris: Gallimard, 1967 vol. 8: part 3, 395.

18 See H. Mitchell, "Tocqueville's Flight from Doubt and His Search for Certainty: Skepticism in a Democratic Age," in J. van der Zande and R. H. Popkin (eds.) *The Skeptical Tradition around 1800. Skepticism in Philosophy, Science and Society*, Dordrecht, Boston and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998, 261–82 and *America after Tocqueville. Democracy against Difference*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 176–77.

19 Louis de Bonald, *Trois études sur Bossuet, Voltaire et Condorcet*, Etampes: Clovis, 1998, p. 132.

20 See "Sur les Juifs," in Louis de Bonald, *Oeuvres complètes.* Vol. I. Paris: A la propagande des bons livres, n.d., 933–47.

21 Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, F. E. Manuel (ed.) Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1968, pp. 135-44. Quotation from p. 144.

22 A key section in which these and other arguments are made is to be found in Ch. 6, "Essai analytique sur les lois naturelles de l'ordre social, ou du pouvoir, du ministre et du sujet dans la société," in Louis de Bonald, *Oeuvres complètes.* Vol. II, 1025–49.

23 Ibid., 1106.

24 See Maistre's *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques et des autres institutions humaines*, Paris: H. Pélagaud Fils et Roblot, 1871, pp. 58–59, 63, 85. The *Essai* was published in 1809.

25 Ibid., pp. xv, 29. In *St. Petersburg Dialogues*, R. A. Lebrun (trans. and ed.), Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993, p. 55, Maistre writes that "Languages began, but the *word never*, and not even with man. The one has necessarily preceded the other, since *the word* is possible only through the VERB [i.e. the Word of God]." Emphasis and capitalization are Maistre's.

26 Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur*, p. 31.

27 Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, Paris: H. Pélagaud Fils et Roblot, 1872, Ch. 2.

28 Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur*, p. 85.

29 Ibid., p. 75

30 Ibid., p. 64. Note 1.

31 David Hume, *The History of England*, 6 vols, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1983, Vol. V, Ch. 59. I have been unable to find the passage, cited in 30, as given in Maistre's quotation. For a revisionist view of Maistre's importance as an anti-modernist, as an anti-meliorist attacking all wishful thinking about human goodness, as a thinker who takes a long and hard look at human depravity and the enduring history of human sacrifice in the generations after his death, see O. Bradley, *A Modern Maistre. The Social and Political Thought of Joseph de Maistre*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999.

32 For this interpretation, see A. Hofman, "Opinion, Illusion, and the Illusion of Opinion: Barruel's Theory of Conspiracy," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 1993, vol. 27, 27–60. See H. Mitchell, *Individual Choice and the Structures of History*, pp. 234–35 for Tocqueville's dismissal of conspiracy theories, particularly Barruel's.

33 A. Cochin, *L'Esprit du jacobinisme: une interprétation de la Révolution française*, J. Baechler (ed.) Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1979. See F. Furet,

*Interpreting the French Revolution*, E. Forster (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, Ch. 3, and p. 204 for the citation.

34 Ibid., pp. 54–55.

35 R. Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews. Representations of Jews in France, 1715–1815* Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2003, p. 157.

36 Charles Fourier, *Théorie des quatre mouvements*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 88 ff., cited in Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, pp. 48–49. Note 56.

37 Alphonse Toussenel, *Les Juifs: rois de l'époque: Histoire de la féodalité financière*, Paris: A la Librairie de l'Ecole Sociétaire, 1845. The book was republished in 1886 following the publication of Edouard Drumont's deadly anti-Semitic book, *La France juive, essai d'histoire contemporaine*, Paris: C. Marpon and F. Flammarion, 1886.

38 Alexandre Weill, "Critique littéraire," *La Démocratie Pacifique* March 17, 1847, cited in M. Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France*, p. 199

39 The relevant chapters in *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, S. Gilbert (trans.), Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1955, are 2 and 3 in Part I. Quotations from pp. 11 and 13.

40 Ibid.,156.

41 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, C. C. O'Brien (ed.) Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, p. 160.

42 See P. Raynaud, "Burke et les Allemands," in F. Furet and M. Ozouf (eds.) *The Transformation of Political Culture 1789–1848.* Vol. III. *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture.* Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1989, 59–78.

43 H. Arendt, *On Revolution*, New York: Viking Press, 1963, p. 193.

44 See H. Mitchell, "Edmund Burke's Language of Politics and His Audience," in H. Chisick with I. Zinguer and O. Elyada (eds.) *The Press in the French Revolution*, Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1991, 335–60, citation from p. 340.

45 Burke, *Reflections*, pp. 136, 144,

46 Burke to Champion, *ante* August 1776. in *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, 10 vols. W. T. Copeland *et al.* (eds.) Vol. III. Cambridge and Chicago: Cambridge University Press and University of Chicago Press, 1958–78, 248.

47 Edmund Burke, *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly*, in *Works of Edmund Burke.* Vol. II. 529, Bohn's Standard Library, 5th edition, 1883–90. Cited in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 383. Note 39.

48 Burke, *Reflections*, pp. 181–83.

49 Ibid., p. 153

50 See I. Berlin, *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin*, Ramin Jahanbegloo (ed.) London: Peter Halban, 1992, p. 70

51 For a subtle and insightful discussion of Voltaire, optimism and human tragedy, see S. Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought. An Alternative History of Philosophy*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002, pp. 128–48. See Chapter 5, on Voltaire's anti-Pascalian diatribe. While he cautioned against Pascal's "misanthropy"—his elevation of human misery above human grandeur—he wavers between these two conceptions of the human condition, alleviating his doubts by belief that the first will retreat in time before the second.

52 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, F. M. Müller (trans.), Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966. From the First Preface (1781), p. xxiv. Note.

53 Ibid., p. xxiv.

54 Ibid., p. 16

55 Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings*, A. Wood and G. di Giovanni (eds. and trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1998, citations from pp. 130–31.

56 Kant, "The Contest of Faculties," in H. Reiss (ed.) *Kant, Political Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 177.
57 E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, F. C. A. Koellen and J.P. Pettegrove (trans.), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951, p. 219. In the same year that Cassirer's book was published, a young Hannah Arendt published "Aufklärung und Judenfrage," in *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland* 1932, vol. 4, translated as " The Enlighhtenment and the Jewish Question" in H. Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, J. Kohn and R. H. Feldman (eds.) New York: Schocken Books, 2007, 3–18. She argued that Herder denied the Jews their own past in order to restore them to humanity and bring them into the present.
58 Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, p. 216.
59 Ibid., p. 219.
60 Ibid., p. 196. See also, H. Mah, *Enlightenment Phantasies. Cultural Identity in France and Germany, 1750–1914*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003, pp. 42-4, who asserts that Herder, the German particularist, gave in to his other side, the Enlightenment *philosophe*.
61 F. M. Barnard has done much to see Herder in a wider perspective, His older study *Herder's Social and Political Thought*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965, has been followed by *Herder on Nationality and History*, Montreal, Kingston and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003. I also rely on I. Berlin, *Vico and Herder. Two Studies in the History of Ideas*, New York: Vintage Books, 1977.
62 Berlin, *Vico and Herder*, p. 210.
63 Cited in D. Denby, "Herder: Culture, Anthropology and the Enlightenment," *History of the Human Sciences*, 2005, vo1. 8, 66.
64 Berlin, *Vico and Herder*, p. 159. Note.6.
65 Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 56.
66 Georg W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History (1827–1831)*. Part IV, Section 3: *The New Age*, L. Dickey and H. B. Nisbet (eds.) in *Political Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 214.
67 Ibid., pp. 214–19, quotations from pp. 216, 219.
68 G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, T. M. Knox (trans.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942, p. 11
69 See J. Ritter, *Hegel and the French Revolution. Essays on The Philosophy of Right*, R. D. Winfield (trans.), Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1982, 44–51 and Y. Yovel, *Dark Riddle. Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Jews*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998, pp. 25–31.
70 G. W. F. Hegel, *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*, in *Early Theological Writings*, T. M. Knox (trans.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948, p. 150.
71 Ibid., pp. 177–81.
72 This citation and the following in this paragraph are in ibid., pp. 185, 187–88.
73 Ibid., p. 196.
74 Ibid., p. 202.
75 Ibid., pp. 204–5.
76 G. W. F. Hegel, *The German Constitution*, in *Political Writings*, p. 101
77 G. W. F. Hegel, *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*, p. 196
78 G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 331, p. 213; paragraph 351, p. 219; paragraph 279, pp. 168–69. Note *.
79 F. Nietzsche, *Daybreak. Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, M. Clark and B. Leiter (eds.) and R.J. Hollingdale (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, Book III, Section 197, pp. 117–18. Emphasis is Nietzsche's.
80 F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, W. Kaufmann (ed.) New York: Vintage Books, 1967, p. 54.

81 F. Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human. A Book for Free Spirits*, R.J. Hollingdale (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 169. Nietzsche's emphasis.
82 F. Nietzsche, *Daybreak. Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, Preface, p. 3.
83 F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, W. Kaufmann (trans.), New York: Vintage Books, 1966, Section 224, p. 151.
84 Ibid., Section 239, pp. 167–70.
85 Ibid., Section 46, p. 61.
86 Ibid., Preface, pp. 3–4.
87 F. Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, Book III, Section 205, p. 206.
88 F. Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, section 475, p.175. Nietzsche's emphasis. Yovel, *Dark Riddle*, p. 168, writes that, when Nietzsche speaks of Jewish scholars as carriers of Greco-Roman rationalism, he meant "its skeptical, critical side (not its dogmatic teaching)." In an additional view, "Nietzsche, the Jews, and *Ressentiment*," in R. Schacht (ed.) *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Mortality: Essays on Nietzsche's "Geneaology of Morals*," Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994, 231, Yovel writes that for Nietzsche cultural renewal would be achieved "as appropriate for the harm inflicted on Europe by the Jews' priestly ancestors. To fulfill their new role, the Jews must give up their uniqueness and seclusion and mix with the other races in creating a Dionysian Europe, freed of Christian culture."
89 See D. M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment. The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 193–203. Quotation from p. 197.
90 M. Walzer, *Politics and Passion. Toward a More Egalitarian Liberalism*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004, p. xiii.
91 Cf. M. M. Gordon's early sociological study, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1964.
92 P. Connerton, *The Tragedy of Enlightenment. An Essay on the Frankfurt School* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp. 18–19.
93 Walzer, *Politics and Passion*, p. 139.
94 M. Walzer, *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad*, Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994, p. 8.
95 S. E. Bronner, *Reclaiming the Enlightenment. Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, Ch. 8, quotes from pp. 147-8.
96 J. I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested. Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670–1752*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 808.
97 Ibid., p. 871.
98 B. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness, An Essay in Genealogy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002, p. 226.
99 B. Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1993, p. 11.
100 Ibid., p. 162.
101 J. Kristeva, *Nations Without Nationalism*, L. S. Roudiez (trans.), New York: Columbia University Press, 1993. Cited in Walzer, *On Toleration*, pp. 89–90.

## 7 Jewish identity and the Jewish question: the power of ancestral voices in a post-Enlightenment age

1 R. Mortier, *Les combats des Lumières*, Ferney-Voltaire: Centre international d'étude du XVIIIe siècle, 2000, p. 300.
2 Ibid., p. 312. The quotation is from J. Katz's classic study, *Out of the Ghetto. The Jewish Background of Jewish Emancipation 1770–1870*, Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1973.

3 H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951, p. 230.

4 A. Finkielkraut, "In the Name of the Other: Reflections on the Coming Anti-Semitism," Azure, Autumn 2004, no. 18. Online. Available http://azure.org.il/magazine/magazine.asp?id=19 Accessed September 1, 2007. See also, "The Religion of Humanity and the Sins of the Jews," ibid., Summer 2005, no. 21. Online. Available http://azure.org.il/magazine/magazine/.asp?id=19 Many of his ideas may be traced to his early book, *The Imaginary Jew*, K. O'Neill and D. Suchoff (trans.), Lincoln, Nebraska and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994, first published in France in 1980. See also Finkielkraut's *Defeat of the Mind*, J. Friedlander (trans.), New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, for an analysis of Julien Benda, author of *The Treason of the Intellectuals* (1926), who lamented, in the name of the Enlightenment, the shrill patriotism at the time of the Dreyfus Affair. The interviews he has had with a number of historians, philosophers, other academics in various fields, politicians, bureaucrats, and journalists, are transcriptions from his radio talk program, "Répliques," and are published as *Qu'est-ce que la France*, Paris: Stock/Editions du Panama, 2007. They raise some fundamental questions of identity in a changing France that is also examining how to retain its distinct presence in the European Community.

5 See his essay, "Is the French Model in Decline," in E. Ben-Rafael, T. Gergely, and J. Gorny (eds.) *Jewry Between Tradition and Secularism. Europe and Israel Compared*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006, 13–26. This collection of essays canvasses the challenges contemporary Jewish communities face in various nation-states of Europe.

6 T. Judt, in his *New York Review of Books* article, "Israel: The Alternative," October 23, 2003, vol. 50, not only condemned Israel's occupation policies, but also questioned the future viability of a Jewish nation-state, arguing that it is an anachronism, and that it should instead work towards the creation of a binational entity.

7 A. Hertzberg and A. Hirt-Manheimer, *Jews. The Essence and Character of a People*, San Francisco: Harper, 1998, p. 5.

8 See Y. Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, 2 vols, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989, Vol. II, pp. 78–103.

9 Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," in *Collected Works*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975. Vol. III, 174. Marx's prediction was that, both in its religious foundations and in the successive economic roles that Jews occupied from ancient to modern times, Judaism would simply disappear, according to a general theory of uninterrupted progressive capitalist development in the course of which Jewish identity would vanish just as surely as all other such identities, transforming all in a world composed of transparent human beings. For an intelligent study of Marxism and the Jewish question, see E. Traverso, *The Marxists and the Jewish Question. The History of a Debate 1843–1943*, B. Gibbons (trans.), Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994.

10 H. Labroue, *Voltaire antijuif*, Paris: Les Documents Contemporains,1942.

11 Ibid., pp. 242–43.

12 See P. Pellerin, "Le 'Voltaire antijuif' d'Henri Labroue: une escroquerie intellectuelle meurtrière," *SVEC*, 2004, vol. 7, 173–85. *L'Université libre* published its denunciation on 11 June 1942; the *Pensée* editorial appeared in the October–November–December 1944 issue. See also the reference by A. Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 246.

13 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Réflexions sur la question juive*, G. J. Backer (trans.), Paris: Paul Morihien, 1946 and translated two years later as *Anti-Semite and Jew*, New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1948. The citations are taken from the English translation.

14 Ibid., p.54.
15 Ibid., pp. 101–2.
16 For an early review of the American edition, see H. Rosenberg, " Does the Jew Exist? Sartre's Jewish Morality Play," *Commentary*, January 1949, vol. 7, no.1, 8–18. Citation from 18.
17 M. Walzer, in his preface to the 1995 edition, noted sharply that Sartre's knowledge of Judaism was abysmal, as witness his challenge that Jews, now that they were free, should conform to universalist ideals, presumably ideals that were thought to be foreign to them. See *Anti-Semite and Jew*, New York: Chicken Books, 1995, pp. xxi-xxv.
18 S. R. Suleiman, "The Jew in Sartre's *Réflexions sur la question juive:* An Exercise in Historical Reading," in L. Nochlin and T Garb (eds.) *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1995, 201–18. Suleiman reviews her earlier views and concludes that it is more important for the oppressed to speak for themselves than let others perform that task, in "Rereading Rereading: Further Reflections on Sartre's *Réflexions*," *October*, 1999, no. 87, 29–38.
19 Finkielkraut, *The Imaginary Jew*, pp. 9–10.
20 A. Aciman, "Reflections of an Uncertain Jew," *The Three Pennyreview*, Spring 2000. Online. Available http://threepennyreview.com/samples/aciman_sp00.html
21 See two of Aciman's books, *Out of Egypt: A Memoir*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Geroux, 1994 and *False Papers*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Geroux, 2000.
22 Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, p. 90. In *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question. Anti-Antisemitism and the Politics of the French Intellectual*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2006, J. Judaken makes Sartre the center of his study of the French intellectuals who have dealt with the Jewish presence in France. He argues that the Jewish Question was of central importance to Sartre's life and his engagement in French political and cultural life. His discussion of authenticity on pp. 128–46 is not unlike my own.
23 Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, p. 153.
24 Finkielkraut, *The Imaginary Jew*, pp. 166–67, does not comment on this, perhaps out of loyalty to his romantic attachment to Sartre, but he is clearly at odds with him, as is clear in his rejection of attempts to simplify the question of Jewishness: "The need to give the word Jew an unequivocal and precise content remains an unfulfilled dream . . . 'May there be neither Jews nor Christians unless it be at the moment of prayer for those who pray'—such was the ideal that the philosophy of the Enlightenment set before the Jews. Modernity itself has its origins in this principle. Neither Jews nor Christians, in fact, would exist in the sense that all visible signs of their difference from one another were supposed to have been erased. But in spite of everything, Jewishness has refused to confine itself to the sphere of religious life. Jews who are atheists or assimilated enough to be indistinguishable from their neighbors persist and continue to remain Jewish, even when they have little idea what their obstinacy means."
25 Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, pp. 66–67.
26 Compare D. Hollier's exegesis of Sartre on authenticity, assimilation, and history, "Mosaic: Terminable and Interminable," *October*, 1999, no. 87, 139–60.
27 See his essay, "Materialism and Morality," F. Hunter and J. Torpey (trans.), *Telos*, 1986, vol. 69, 85–118.
28 M. Horkheimer and T W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, J. Cumming (trans.), New York: The Seabury Press, 1972, pp. xi, xiii, xiv.
29 Ibid., p. 31.
30 Ibid., pp. 8–9. The reference is to Genesis I. 26. The reference to Zeus is from Archilochos, fr. 87, quoted by Deussen, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*, Vol. II. Pt. 1, Leipzig, 1911, p. 18.

31 Ibid. The citations are from pp. 10–13.
32 Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: "What is Enlightenment?"" in *Kant. Political Writings*, H. S. Reiss (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 54–55.
33 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. xvii.
34 Ibid., p. 186.
35 Ibid., p. 219.
36 See *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958, p. 171 and *The Life of the Mind. Vol. I. Thinking*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978, pp. 4–5. A. Sutcliffe's analysis of this passage does not note that Horkheimer and Adorno probably meant to distinguish among thought, reason and language, and that the last two can be subject to abuse. See "Myth, Origins, Identity, the Jews, and the Enlightenment Notion of Toleration," *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, 1998, vol. 39, 67–87.
37 T. W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, K. Tarnowski and F. Will (trans,), Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973, p. 8
38 M. Horkheimer and T. W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 218.
39 Cf. H. Williams, "An Enlightenment Critique of The Dialectic of Enlightenment", in M. Fitzpatrick, P. Jones, C. Knellwolf and I. McCalman (eds.) *The Enlightenment World*, London and New York: Routledge, 2004, 635–47. Williams also calls attention to Horkheimer's and Adorno's exaggerated view of Enlightenment optimism, and, calling on Kant as an exemplar, argues, unconvincingly, in my view, that their reflections on the limitations of reason did not correctly represent the Enlightenment.
40 M. Horkheimer and T. W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 199–200. The critic in question is P. Connerton, *The Tragedy of Enlightenment. An Essay on the Frankfurt School*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp. 72–75.
41 M. Horkheimer and T. W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 207.
42 J. Habermas, "The German Idealism of the Jewish Philosophers," in *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, F. G. Lawrence (trans.), Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985, p. 42.
43 See Z. Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.
44 E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, F. C. A. Koellen and J. P. Pettegrove (trans.), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951, pp. xi, 360.
45 E. Cassirer, "Judaism and the Modern Political Myths," *Contemporary Jewish Record*, 1944, no. 7, 126.
46 A Berlin and M.Z. Brettler (eds.) *The Jewish Study Bible*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 148–49, prefer "sculptured image" instead of idol, asserting that the only prohibitions of images were those to be used for worship, and that non-idolatrous statues of certain creatures were allowed, such as the cherubs.
47 E. Cassirer, "Judaism and the Modern Political Myths," 117.
48 E. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944, pp. 107–8.
49 Cassirer, "Judaism and the Modern Political Myths," 123.
50 "La religion juive qui précéda la nôtre, et qui fut donnée par Dieu même, était toute remplie de ces images sous lesquelles Dieu est représenté. Il daigne parler dans un buisson un langage humain; il paraît sur une montagne. Les esprits célestes qu'il envoie viennent tous avec une forme humaine; enfin le sanctuaire est rempli de chérubins, qui sont des corps d'hommes avec des ailes et des têtes animaux. … Dieu malgré sa défense de peindre, et de sculpter aucune figure, a donc daigné se proportionner à la faiblesse humaine, qui demandait qu'on parlât aux sens par des images. … Isäie dans le chap. VI voit le Seigneur assis

sur un trône, et le bas de sa robe qui remplit le temple. Le Seigneur étend sa main, et touche la bouche de Jéremie, au chap. I de ce prophète. Ezéchiel au chap. III voit une trône de saphir, et Dieu lui paraît comme un homme assis sur ce trône. Ces images n'altèrent point la pureté de la religion juive, qui jamais n'employa les tableaux, les statues, les idoles, pour représenter Dieu aux yeux du people."

51 L. Strauss, *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity. Essays and Lectures in Modern Jewish Thought*, K. H. Green (ed.) Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997, p.102.

52 L. Strauss, *The Early Writings (1921–32)*, M. Zank (ed.) Albany: State University of New York, 2002, p.114.

53 L. Strauss, *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity*, pp. 91–92, 101–2, 142–43, 317 and *passim*.

54 Ibid., p. 116. For S. B. Smith's interpretation of Strauss on some of these questions, see *Spinoza's Book of Life. Freedom and Redemption in the Ethics*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003, pp. 190–99.

55 L. Strauss, *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity*, pp. 130–31.

56 L. Strauss, *Philosophy and Law: Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors*, E. Adler (trans.), Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985, p. 30. Emphasis is Strauss'.

57 L. Strauss, *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity*, p. 141.

58 Ibid., p. 143

59 Ibid., p. 128

60 U. Simon, "The Bible in Israeli Life," in *The Jewish Study Bible*, pp. 1990–2000. Citation from p. 1998.

61 Ibid., p. 1999.

62 See J. Miles, *God. A Biography*, New York: Vintage Books, 1996, pp. 224, 249. It is also noteworthy that image and likeness, according to B. M. Metzger and R. E. Murphy (eds.) *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 3, do not refer "to physical resemblance but to relationship and activity."

63 E. Cassirer, "Judaism and the Modern Political Myths," 117–18. Instead of Cassirer's translation, I have used the one in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*.

64 E. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 55.

65 E. Benbassa and J. C Attia, *The Jews and their Future. A Conversation on Judaism and Jewish Identities*, P. Camiller (trans.), London and New York: Zed Books, 2004, p. 31. Sections 10–15 are particularly excellent.

66 See *The Dream of the Poem. Hebrew Poetry from Muslim and Christian Spain 590–1492*, P. Cole (trans. and ed.) Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007, Quotations from pp. 1 and 529–30. See also p. 358.

67 H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 82. Arendt's discussion of racism and anti-Semitism in *fin de siècle* France is much the most valuable part of the book.

68 H. Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen. The Life of a Jewish Woman*, R. and C. Winston (trans.), Revised ed. New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974, p. 224. She put it this way in the revised edition, first published in 1957, six years after the publication of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, incorporating its insights in the new edition of the biography: "In a society on the whole hostile to the Jews—and that situation obtained in all countries in which Jews lived, down to the twentieth century—it is possible to assimilate only by assimilating anti-Semitism also."

69 H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 83.

70 Ibid., p. 4.

71 Ibid., p. 295. Cf. A. Margalit, *The Decent Society*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996, and G. Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz. The Witness*

*and the Archive*. D. Heller-Roazen (trans.), New York: Zone Books, 1999 for the figurative language they use to describe the inmates of the camps—mere animal life, lice, the heaps of material, the bare life; indeed, a language that does not describe victims, for a victim supposes the existence of a human life. That "[t]hey insisted on their nationality," the expectation that it alone could save them,—even if they were not citizens, only human beings—is taken up in the Conclusion.

72 H. Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, J. Kohn and R. H. Feldman (eds.) New York: Schocken Books, 2007, p. 56.

73 P. Vidal-Naquet, "Against the Murderers of Memory," in *Questioning Judaism. Interviews by Elisabeth Weber*, R. Bowlby (trans.), Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004, 26–38. Quotation from p. 37.

74 B. Lang, "The Phenomenal-Noumenal Jew. Three Antinomies of Jewish Identity," in D. T. Goldberg and M. Krausz (eds.) *Jewish Identity*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993, 279–90. Quotation from p. 288.

75 S. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, W. D. Robson-Scott (trans.), Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, n.d., pp. 69–70, 96.

76 Cited in J. Rose, "In Our Present-Day White Christian Culture," *London Review of Books*, July 8, 2004, vol. 26, p. 16.

77 The extract is from the Hebrew edition of *Totem and Taboo*, cited in Y. Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, Vol. II, p. 166. Yovel writes that "Freud says that he cannot clearly express this essence in words, yet adds rather optimistically, 'Some day no doubt it will become accessible to the scientific mind.' "

78 G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi. The Mystical Messiah 1626–76* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973, p. xi.

79 H. Arendt, *Sur l'antisémitisme*, Paris: Seuil, 1984, p. 166.

80 I. Berlin, "Jewish Slavery and Emancipation," in *The Power of Ideas*, H. Hardy (ed. and trans.), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, pp. 168–69.

81 H. Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen. The Life of a Jewish Woman*, pp. 219, 223.

82 P. Birnbaum and I. Katznelson (eds.) *Paths of Emancipation. Jews, States, and Citizenship*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 14.

83 Ibid., p. 23.

84 H. Putnam, "Judaism and Jewish Identity," in D. T. Goldberg and M. Krausz, *Jewish Identity*, 108–18.

85 G. Steiner, *Lessons of the Masters*, Cambridge, Mass.; Harvard University Press, 2003, pp. 152, 150–56.

86 G. Steiner, *Errata. An Examined Life*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997.

87 Y. H. Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminal and Interminable*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991, p.10.

88 Z. Bauman, "Exit Visas and Entry Tickets: Paradoxes of Jewish Assimilation," *Telos*, 1988, no. 77, 56.

89 P. Roth, *The Counterlife*, New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1986, pp. 368–70.

90 P. Roth, *The Plot Against America*, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004, p. 220.

91 M. Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, New York: Harper Collins, 2007.

92 Ibid., p. 400.

93 Ibid., p. 411.

94 Y. Slezkine, *The Jewish Century*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

95 Ibid., 62.

96 Ibid., 263.

97 Ibid., 351.

98 J. Daniel, *The Jewish Prison: A Rebellious Meditation on the State of Judaism*, C. Mandell (trans.), Hoboken, New Jersey: Melville House Publishing, 2005.

99 G. Josipovici, "Going and Resting," in D. T. Goldberg and M. Kraus, *Jewish Identity*, pp. 309–21.

100 Daniel, *The Jewish Prison*, p. 200.
101 Ibid., p. 203.
102 Ibid., p. 76.
103 See J. Klausner, "The Jewish Character ot Spinoza's Teaching," in M. Walzer, *et al.* (eds.), *The Jewish Political Tradition*. Vol. II, 417–19. P. Vidal-Naquet wants to claim a role for Spinoza in the history of political thought that he would not have been able to develop in the synagogue. See P. Vidal-Naquet, "Against the Murderers of Memory," in *Questioning Judaism. Interviews by Elisabeth Weber*, p. 33. For E. Lévinas's argument that Spinoza was guilty of "betrayal of the truth of Judaism to the revelation of the New Testament," see his *Difficult Freedom. Essays on Judaism*, S. Hand (trans.), London: The Athlone Press, 1990, p. 108. For a fine analysis of the most recent literature on whether Spinoza should be treated as a philosopher who did not seek to depart from Jewish tradition, and revealed this, however eliptically in his philosophy, or repudiated it in favor of univeralism based on rational premises, see A. Sutcliffe, "Sephardic Amsterdam and the Myths of Jewish Modernity," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, summer 2007, vol. 97, 417–37.
104 See Y. Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, Vol. I, 203.
105 O. Leaman, *Jewish Thought. An Introduction*, New York and London: Routledge, 2006.
106 From Jorge Luis Borges, *Selected Poems*, A. Coleman (ed.) and W. Barnstone (trans.), Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2000, pp. 228–29.

## 8 Conclusion

1 See, for example, L. Rosenzweig, "Born in 1943," in *Questioning Judaism. Interviews by Elisabeth Weber*, R. Bowlby (trans.), Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004, p. 130: "What position should one take in the debate on assimilation? You can be totally assimilated and still claim an adhesion and a filiation that needn't necessarily be a problem for others! I myself am more and more French," pp. 122–35. For another example of the failure of classical assimilation, see A. Finkielkraut, *The Imaginary Jew*, K. O. Neill and D. Suchoff (trans.) University of Nebraska Press, 1994, p. 178. He not only lambastes assimilation as a mirage leading nowhere, except to incite racist anti-Semitism, but also makes a plea for an end to identifying Judaism with a "vain proclamation of . . . alterity."
2 Voltaire, "*Patrie*. Homeland," *Pocket Philosophical Dictionary*, in D. Williams (ed.) *Voltaire. Political Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 26.
3 Ibid., p. 25
4 Cited in P. Vidal-Naquet, *The Jews. History, Memory, and the Present*, D. A. Curtis (ed. and trans.) New York: Columbia University Press, p. 66.
5 See A. Wieviorka, "Pierre Vidal-Naquet face aux 'assassins de la mémoire,' " in F. Hartog, P. Schmitt and A. Schnapp (eds.) *Pierre–Vidal Naquet, un historien de la cité*, Paris: Editions La Découverte, 1998, 191–98.
6 "Citoyen," *Encyclopédie*, vol. 3, 488–89.
7 Voltaire, "*Patrie*. Homeland" in D. Williams, *Voltaire. Political Writings*, p. 26.
8 The liberal bishops and conservative members also spoke in favor of including duties in the Declaration. See M. Gauchet, *La Révolution des pouvoirs*, Paris: Gallimard, 1989, pp. 70–74.
9 M. Gauchet, "Rights of Man," in F. Furet and M. Ozouf, (eds.) A. Goldhammer, (trans.), *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 824.
10 For a fine spun analysis of the Declaration, see P. Raynaud, "La Déclaration des droits de l'homme," in C. Lucas (ed.) *The Political Culture of the French*

*Revolution.* Vol. II. *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 139–49.

11 J.-J. Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book II, Ch..4, p. 148, in R. D. Masters and C. Kelly, (eds.) *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. II. Hanover and London: University of New England Press, 1994.

12 Ibid., Book III, Ch. 18, p. 196.

13 Ibid. Book II, Ch. 4, p. 148

14 Ibid., pp. 149–50.

15 Ibid., Book III, Ch. 18, p. 197.

16 For an intricate examination of some of these problems, see L. Jaume, *La Liberté et la loi. Les origines philosophiques du libéralisme*, Paris: Fayard, 2000, Ch. 7.

17 H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951, pp. 130–31.

18 Cited in M. R. Marrus and R. O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, New York: Basic Books, 1981, pp. 141–42.

19 F. Furet, *In the Workshop of History*, J. Mandelbaum (trans.) Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984, p. 217.

20 P. Nora, "Nation," in F. Furet and M. Ozouf (eds.) *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, A. Goldhammer (trans.) Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 745.

21 Joseph-Barthélemy, *Ministre de la Justice. Vichy 1941–43.*, Paris: Pygmalion, Gérard Watelet, 1989, p. 411. Note 1.

22 Ibid., p. 403. Emphasis is Barthélemy's.

23 R. H. Weisberg, *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France*, New York: New York University Press, 1996, pp. 133–34. Weisberg's book is indispensable.

24 Barthélemy, *Mémories*, p. 403.

25 On Barthélemy, like-minded French jurists and parallel developments in German juridical thought, especially around the figure of Carl Schmitt, see two articles by D. Bates, "Political Unity and the Spirit of Law: Juridical Concepts of the State in the Late Third Republic," *French Historical Studies*, Winter 2005, vol. 28, 69–101 and " 'Legitimität' and 'L'égalite.' Political Theology and Democratic Thought in an Age of World War," in M. Geyer and H. Lehmann (eds.) *Religion und Nation, Nation und Religion*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004, 435–58.

26 Weisberg, *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France*, pp. 124–27.

27 See Maurice Barrès, *Scènes et Doctrines du nationalisme*, 2 vols., Paris: Plon, 1925 and Z. Sternhell, *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme française 1871–1914*, Paris: A. Colin,1972.

28 Weisberg, *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France*, pp. 134, 413.

29 Ibid., p. 412.

30 Ibid., p. 134.

31 Ibid., p. 137.

32 Ibid., p. 136.

33 Barthélemy, *Mémoires*, pp. 311–14.

34 Weisberg, *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France*, p. 154.

35 Ibid., pp. 411–14, 421, 425, 428.

36 Voltaire, "Democracy," *Questions on the Encyclopedia*, in D. Williams (ed.) *Voltaire. Political Writings*, pp. 33–37, examples and citations from, pp. 35, 37.

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